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THE
COCHIN TRIBES AND CASTES
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.



HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA OF COCHIN

The Cochin Tribes and Castes

VOLUME II.

BY

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THE
COCHIN TRIBES AND CASTES.

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INTRODUCTION.

Owing to ill-health my erudite friend, Professor A. H. Keane, was unable to write the introduction to the second volume of Mr. L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer's monograph, "The Cochin Tribes and Castes", and at a somewhat late date I was requested to do so. Those who have studied the earlier Volume of this enthusiastic and energetic ethnologist will cordially welcome the continuation of his ethnographic researches. The first volume gives a descriptive account of the hill and jungle tribes and other low castes of the State in the ascending order of social status. These backward jungle folk have a peculiar interest for ethnologists as they appear to retain many of the customs and beliefs which we may well suppose characterised mankind in very ancient times; they are ethnological survivals which bear the same relation to anthropology as that borne to zoology by those generalised or persistent types dating from geological antiquity in various groups of animals that rejoice the heart of the zoologist.

The present volume deals with other groups, higher in social grade but not of less interest or importance for the student, for the State of Cochin is fortunate in possessing an assemblage of tribes and castes which is without parallel elsewhere in an area of equal size.

The Nayars have been frequently alluded to by ethnologists and sociologists on account of their peculiar social customs. They were formerly the swordsmen and military caste of the west coast of India; Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* vi. 21) refers to them as Nareæ. Their origin is still problematical, but it is generally held that they are a Dravidian people who have been modified by mixture with the Nambuthiris, indeed judging from photographs it is not always possible to determine to which of these two peoples a given individual belongs. They may have been among the first invaders of Malabar and consequently assumed

a dominant position. Mr. Thurston (*Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, vol. v. p. 284) refers to successive waves of different castes and tribes from the Canarese and Tamil countries; these settled down, "adopted the customs and manners, and assumed the caste names of the more respectable of the community that surrounded them. This process of assimilation is going on even yet. Chetties of Coimbatore . . . Gollas . . . from the north have similarly, in course of time, assumed Nayar customs and manners, and are now styled Nayars, Again the Rajas and Chieftains of the country sometimes raised individuals or classes who had rendered them meritorious service to the rank of Nayars. These men were therefore styled Nayars, but formed a separate sub-division with little or no communion with the rest of the Nayar class, until at least, after the lapse of generations, when their origin was forgotten. Nayar may thus at present be considered to be a term almost as wide and general as Sudra" (H. A. Stuart, *Madras Census Report*, 1891). Mr. M. Sankara Menon (*Census of India*, 1901, vol. xx. Cochin, Pt. I. p. 151) also believes in the mixed origin of the Nayars and suggests that there may be a Kolarian element in the population. When the observations on the physical anthropology of the inhabitants of the State are published we shall probably be in a better position to discuss the problem.

The Nayars are divided up into so many groups and sub-groups that it is not easy to define exactly what these are; on p.97 we read that "Among the high caste Nayars, the recognition of caste by occupation is not possible. They were at one time a military caste . . . Among the lower classes of Nayars, there were sub-castes (potters, weavers, copper-smiths, etc.) . . . but the men of these sub-castes have abandoned their traditional occupations and consider it a disgrace to be known by their original occupation." It seems an undue extension of the term to describe them all as members of one caste, on the other hand there does not appear to have been sufficient solidarity among them to warrant their being termed a tribe as N. Subramaniya Iyer, following Bhattacharya, has done (*Census of India*, 1901, vol. xxvi. Travancore, p. 321). M. Sankara Menon however says (l. c. p. vi): "A number of *tarawads* (matriarchal family groups) related together has all the features of a regular clan . . . Two or more clans having the

same social status are grouped into a *jāthi* or caste of later times, which has in its turn all the characteristics of a tribe . . . Thus, the Nayar community is even to this day divided into tribes, which are again sub-divided into clans and families." The Nayars may therefore be best described as simply a people.

There are two forms of marriage among the Nayars : the *tālikettu kalyānam* obligatory only on females, and the *sambandham*. The former or *tāli*-tying ceremony is compulsory on every girl before she attains maturity, though there is a tendency towards laxity in this respect now-a-days. The ceremony takes place every ten or twelve years, when all the girls down to the baby in the cradle must undergo it if they have not already done so. It is a formal affair, celebrated with complicated rites and much festivity. There may be a bridegroom or *tāli*-tier for each girl, or he may be married to all the girls. He may be of any age, but in the northern parts of the State and elsewhere a boy or boys are customary. On the fourth or fifth day the wedding dress is torn to signify the dissolution of marriage, the *tāli* may be removed then or later. In poor families the mother ties the *tāli* in the nearest temple. If the *tāli*-tier, of whatever rank he may be, wishes to take the girl as his wife he is at liberty to do so with the consent of her parents, in which case he has to celebrate the *sambandham* by giving her presents of cloth. It is also understood that till the severing of the cloth on the fourth or fifth day he has the right to cohabit with her. Every conceivable designation has been applied to the *tāli*-tying ceremony from a "formal marriage" to "a ridiculous farce". N. S. Iyer (*Census of India*, 1901, Travancore pt. 1. p. 328) quotes Sir T. Muttuswami Iyer who describes it as a "religious ceremony" to give the girl a marriageable status . . . A ceremony which creates the tie of marriage only to be dissolved at its close suggests an intention rather to give the girl the merits of a religious ceremony than to generate the relation of husband and wife."

The second or real marriage, *sambandham*, good or auspicious union (also known as *gunā dosham*, good and evil), is invariably accompanied by gifts of a cloth and money and is a quiet affair with the minimum amount of ceremony. The proper spouse for a young man is the daughter of his maternal

uncle (cross-cousin marriage). "The union is generally effected with mutual consent, but is terminable at the will of either party" (M. S. Menon *l.c.* p. 160).

There cannot be intermarriage between descendants of any female ancestor. A man may not marry the sister of his deceased wife. Among the high class people marriage is hypergamous, but endogamous for the low castes.

The Nayers are not only a matrilineal people, but they afford one of the most striking examples of that rare social condition, the matriarchate. We are probably safe in regarding this as a very ancient institution among the original Nagas, and in their case it was associated with another rare custom, polyandry.

Polyandry seems usually to be related in Central Asia with poverty and unfavourable conditions of existence, but this cannot be a determining factor in Cochin. Various circumstances here appear to contribute to this custom. In the first place there is the rigid organisation of the *tarawad* which, at all events in former days, relegated the husband or consort to the position of a negligible outsider. Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer says that according to the orthodox view "the *sambandham* or *pudamuri* ceremony is not a marriage in the legal or sacramental sense of the term . . . The Nambuthiris do not look upon it as a marriage . . . The union may terminate at any time from wantonness, caprice or any other reason, and if the couple joined together by *pudamuri* were satisfied with one night of hymeneal bliss, there is no legal impediment to prevent separating without any formality on the following morning" (p. 35). "Further the person that begot a child in a *marumakkathayam* [*i. e.* matrilineal] female was originally regarded as a casual visitor and the sexual relation depended for its continuance on mutual consent . . ." As a matter of fact "all or nearly all of the Nayers [now] cling to one wife for life, and with them *sambandham* is the real marriage, *de facto* and *de jure*. This is the real state of affairs in the States of Cochin and Travancore as well as in British Malabar" (p. 36).

Although the custom appears to have died out except perhaps in a few out-of-the-way places, there is no doubt that true polyandry occurred among the Nayers. Hamilton says that the women except those of high rank may marry up to twelve

husbands at one time if they please, "the husbands agree very well, for they cohabit with her in their turns, according to their priority of marriage, ten days, more or less, according as they can fix a term among themselves" ("A new account of the East Indies", in Pinkerton, *Coll. of Voy. and Travels* VIII. 1811, p. 374). The husbands were not necessarily brothers though they probably usually were. They in their turn do not seem to have been limited in the number of terminable marriages which they could make. Dr. Rivers has pointed out similarities between the marriage institutions of the Nayers and Todas (*The Todas*, 1906, p. 699). Evidently in olden days there was a system of more or less temporary marriage which was at the same time polyandric and polygynic, in other words it was a true polygamy, and this was the recognised method of increasing the membership of a *tarawad*. Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer points out (pp. 36, 38) that the old state of affairs has passed away and the people are virtually monogamists, though there is still considerable diversity of opinion and practice.

The perpetuation of the inconspicuous position of a husband was probably strengthened by the military organisation of the Nayers. It is not desirable from a military point of view that warriors should be cumbered with the cares of a wife and family. This was acted upon by Zulu chiefs and by the Masai, though the latter recognised the frailty of the flesh by allowing young girls to live in the warriors' kraals. Polyandry among the Nayers was also fostered by the power of a chieftain of selling to a man the rights of a husband over another man's wife (p. 59), and especially by the teaching and practice of the Brahmans (p. 40). The Nambuthiri dominance threw on the subject classes a large number of wifeless males without any property of their own, but the Nayar social system was "admirably suited to their peculiar circumstances and urgent needs" (M. S. Menon, *l. c.* p. x), and they had every reason to conserve it as there is no restriction to the number of Nayar women with whom a man may be associated.

M. Sankara Menon believes that, judging from what still obtains among the non-Aryans of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, the people of Kerala, as the whole district was called, were organised in tribes each led by a chief who took possession of lands by clearing waste ground, or by expelling or enslaving

the owners, the land being afterwards distributed among clans or smaller groups which co-operated in the work of clearing or of conquest; the tribes without landed estates obtained subsistence by different kinds of services to the rest. The government was in all probability in the hands of the *karavans*, or head men of families, there being no evidence of any monarchical constitution.

There is hardly any doubt, Mr. Menon thinks, that at least in the first half of the fourth century B. C. Aryans invaded Kerala. These were the Nambuthiris (Nambutiris or Nambūdiris), who by temperament and training were quite a different kind of people from what their peace-loving, unobtrusive descendants have long since become. As Parasurāma, their accredited leader, was the bitterest enemy of the Kshatriyas it is improbable that members of the warrior caste accompanied him, therefore the Nambuthiris must have been fighting men and doubtless brought followers in their train. The Aryans were first repelled by the Nagas or serpent people, who were probably the ancestors of the Nayars, but later they overcame them, and it is an interesting example of the irony of fate that there is a serpent grove in almost every compound or garden occupied by high caste Malayali Hindus, and snakes are fed and nursed in the house of the "*Pāmbumēkāt Nambūdri*" (M. S. Menon, *l. c.* p. 25). Finally came the time of social assimilation and national consolidation, but the abiding predominance of the Nambuthiris in the community was probably due as much to the occupation by force of arms as to their superior religion and civilisation. After the conquest they were settled by their leader in villages occupied by the indigenous agrarian peoples, who were subsequently classified as Sudras. To induce an idea of nationality the new-comers were prevailed upon by Parasurāma, among other things, to wear their tuft of hair in front instead of at the back of the head as in other parts of India. He also attempted with but partial success to assimilate to the Aryan system the many customs and practices which prevailed among the conquered.

In order to maintain the continuous purity of blood and stability of their families and to prevent their becoming weakened by the multiplication of impoverished branches, the rule is enforced that under ordinary circumstances only the eldest son of the Nambuthiris is allowed to marry and he must

marry one, within the caste but outside his own family or *gotra*. Marriage is prohibited within six degrees when the common ancestor is a male and within six or four degrees when the ancestor is a female; conjugal relationship between first cousins is seldom practised, but when it is allowed a man marries the daughter of his maternal uncle after taking a ceremonial bath to indicate that all relationship with his cousin has ceased. Very often the absence of a son to the eldest brother and the necessity of providing the girls with husbands lead a junior member to marry into the same caste as the elder brother's wife, usually her sister. As a rule, however, the junior members enter into *sambandham* with young women of other castes below them up to the high caste Nayars. When a girl of vedic parentage, owing to poverty or other causes, is allowed to be married to a young man of the non-vedic class she loses her status. Polygyny is often indulged in partly to ensure having a son and partly to dispose of the superfluous number of girls. "Two or three girls are married to one man to avoid the payment of heavy sums which are required to get suitable bridegrooms" (p. 210). Polyandry and widow-marriage are absolutely unknown among them.

The relation between the Nambuthiris and the Nayars is a very interesting one and each community has been affected by the other.

Another interesting community is that of the Mappillas who are described in the *Census Report* of 1871 as hybrid Muhammedans whose numbers are constantly increased by the conversion of the slave castes of Malabar, which conversion Mr. Logan says "has had a marked effect in freeing the slave caste in Malabar from their former burthens. By conversion a Cheruman obtains a distinct rise in the social scale, and, if he is in consequence bullied or beaten, the whole Muhammedan community comes to his aid." They too have adopted many Hindu customs, for instance a *tali* is tied round the neck of a bride by her sister, and though inheritance is patrilineal in the Cochin State in North Malabar the Mappillas, like the local Nambuthiris, have adopted the matrilineal law of inheritance. "Curiously enough," Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer informs us, "even among those whose inheritance is patrilineal the wife seldom lives with her husband in his own home, but on the

contrary the husband visits her as in a *marumakkathayam* family."

It is impossible to do justice in an Introduction to the mass of valuable information which Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer has presented to his fellow-students, so I will content myself with a reference to the Black Jews.

One of the most interesting features of the ethnology of Cochin is the community of Black Jews, concerning whom there has been much controversy. There is no doubt that Jews came in early times as settlers, possibly according to some from Yemen, and that they intermarried with the natives. Dr. Redcliffe N. Salaman has recently shewn in a suggestive paper on "Heredity and the Jew" (*Journal of Genetics*, Vol. i. 1911, p. 273) that contrary to current opinion those physical characters which though difficult to describe are generally recognised as "Jewish" are (in Mendelian terminology) recessive when Jews mate with European Gentiles, whereas Gentile physical characters are dominant. Indeed so far as his observations go the Jew-Gentile hybrids conform to Mendel's law, and they "strengthen the view that complex as the origin of the Jew may be, close inbreeding for at least two thousand years has resulted in certain stable or homozygous combinations of factors which react in accordance with the laws of Mendel and which may explain the occurrence of the peculiar facial expression recognised as Jewish (*l. c.* p. 290). With regard to the Cochin Black Jews he says: "The Beni-Israel of India have been settled in India at any rate since 1400 of the present era, but traditionally from pre-exilic times. They are essentially a black people quite unlike the European Jew. They have always been looked down on by their white brethren in India and they have lived as the natives amongst whom they dwell, and with whom there is little doubt they have freely mixed. In the description of them given by Fischberg, he agrees that they are non-Jewish looking and dark skinned; he remarks, however, that every now and again a practically ordinary white skinned individual with Jewish features occurs amongst them. If, as is probable, the Jewish facial features are recessive to the native, then it is only what one should expect to find that the great majority of this isolated community are native-looking and that an occasional recessive should crop out from the mating of two hybrids" (*l. c.* p. 286). It is certain that race mixture has taken

place, and in the Jewish Encyclopædia article a very good account is given of how the Black community has been augmented by the addition of freed slaves belonging to the White Jews, and the conditions of admission are of interest. The absence of Levites amongst the Black Jews is almost certain proof that there can be but very little Jewish blood present. The tradition of Levite and Kohen exists in full strength to-day all over Europe, and there is every reason to believe that it is absolutely well-founded and that no man calls himself Levite or Kohen, who cannot in reality make good the claim. No Levite or Kohen according to Jewish law, may marry a stranger, a proselyte or the daughter of a proselyte, or a divorcee, the sect may therefore be regarded as of strictly Jewish descent. Its absence from the Black Jews is highly suggestive. The community of Black Jews is thus an interesting example of the persistence of social and religious customs long after they have ceased to have any racial significance.

It does not appear from the account of Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer that the Black Jews have any peculiar customs or ceremonies which are not characteristically Jewish, but M. Sankara Menon (Census of India, 1901, XX Cochin pt. 1. p. 67), says: "The Jews of all sections have adopted a few customs peculiar to Hindus. Before going to the Synagogue for marriage a *Tali* is tied round the bride's neck by some near female relative of the bridegroom generally his sister". The tube, or *mezuzah* on the doorpost can be seen in London, and together with the kissing of the finger is an old orthodox custom still common among the Polish Jews.

The desire for sons, with which the custom of the Levirate among the Jews is associated, is not confined to Hindus or Jews. It is not clear whether the Black Jews themselves admit that this desire "is an outcome of the idea that the spirit of the dead would be made happy by homage received at the hands of the male descendants". Letourneau (*The Evolution of Marriage*, p. 265) says: "For the Hebrews, a much more practical people than the Hindoos, the levirate had only an earthly object that of keeping up the name or family of the deceased and all that belonged to it." The idea is tersely expressed in *Ruth* iv. 5, "to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance." Whatever may be the significance of the

levirate among other peoples, its occurrence among the Jews was not due to the idea of property in the widow but to the desire to establish the deceased brother's name and property and was only necessary if the deceased was childless. If the statement that the Jews (presumably the Black Jews) may be married before they "come of age" implies that they may be married before puberty, then we must regard this as a borrowing from Hinduism as there is no evidence that such a thing occurs in any other Jewish community. The breaking of the glass is universal at Jewish weddings and serves as a reminder in the midst of joy of the destruction of Jerusalem. Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer has made a slip in speaking of the *Kethubah* as a commandment, it is merely a plain contract enjoining the husband to maintain the wife and mortgaging all his property as security for the return of her dowry should she be left a widow. It is essentially a document for the protection of the wife. Another variation from accepted usage occurs in regard to divorce and is quite contrary to the Talmudic and mediæval Jewish practice. If the Black Jews look upon the Great Day of Atonement as commemorating a national calamity they are in error as it was observed before any such occurred.

It is true that the Cochin Jews either Black or White have produced very little literature, but we can scarcely call individuals uneducated if they study Hebrew and can read and write the language though few may be able to read and write Malayalam.

If the Cochin Jews may not eat any species of fish they have gone far beyond the Mosaic food taboos, as "whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat" (Leviticus xi. 9).

The accompanying illustrations also point to the foregoing conclusions: the Black Jews present few, if any, traces of Jewish blood, whereas in the photograph of White Jews these are readily discernible.

Students of Ethnology will warmly congratulate Mr. Anantha Krishna Iyer on the completion of his investigations on the customs and beliefs of the peoples of the State of Cochin, and they also would like to mark their appreciation of the

liberality of the enlightened Raja and Government of the State for entrusting the work to such able hands and for the excellent manner in which it has been published.

Christ's College, Cambridge. }
January 25th, 1912.

ALFRED C. HADDON.

CHAPTER I.

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THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

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A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS).

THE NAYARS are an interesting caste of people, forming a considerable portion of the population of the Cochin State; they constitute the third and last of the honoured castes under the name of the pure "*Sudras of Malayala*". They were mostly nobles who engaged neither in handicraft, nor in commerce, nor in any other occupation but that of arms, which they always carried; and no one could be called a Nayar who was not of noble lineage. They were in fact the magnates of the rulers of Kerala, and exercised as much authority over their inferiors as their rulers did over them. They formed in ancient times a warlike race with military leaders and civil administrators of all kinds. Very much influenced as they are by modern civilisation, their customs widely differ from those of other people, in marriage, family and social organizations, as also in maternal filiation. These customs, which are primitive, are being tenaciously retained by them; and they are even now, as they have always been, a unique people whose customs may appear peculiarly strange to foreigners.

The word *Nayar*, which is the honourific plural of *Nayan*, is derived from *Nayaka*, which means a leader of the people; and the name, which in the widest sense at present includes a large number of sub-castes quite distinct from one another, may have been given by a class of Brahmans called the Nambuthiris¹ to the Nayars proper, who formed a military class in ancient times. Some consider it to be more correct to derive *Nayars* from *Nagas* (snakes or snake-worshipping Nagas or Scythians), from the worship of the Nagas or snakes which has been the characteristic cult of the community.

I. See account of the Nambuthiris.

Origin and tradition of
the caste.

According to *Kerala Mahatmyam*, the Nayers are said to be the descendants of the union of the junior members of the Nambuthiri families with the Devagandarva and Rakshasa women brought in by Parasurama from extra-terrestrial regions. The *Keralotpatti* regards them as the descendants of the Sudras who accompanied the Brahman immigrants from outside Kerala.

Some consider that the Nayers came from Tibet where polyandry prevails, while others consider them to be a very early division of the Newars of Nepal. The mere existence of polyandry in Tibet is not sufficient to suggest a racial identity, nor is the form of polyandry prevailing amongst the Nayers the same as that found amongst the Tibetans; ¹ but the marital relations, mode of inheritance and other customs, as well as the style of architecture of Nepal, closely connect them with the Nayers, and go to show a common origin. ²

In the serpent worship of the Nayers, and also their matriarchal customs, others have found traces of a Scythian origin. It is said that the Dravidian languages retain a more intimate connection with the Scythian or Turanean tongues. Philology also comes in to support this view. It is said that Tamil and its cognate tongues were founded upon the ancient Asura or Dravidian speech, and this is strongly confirmed by the fact that the language of the Brahuis, a tribe on the borders of Sind, has been found to be closely allied to them. "The Brahuis' language", says Dr. Caldwell, "enables us to trace the Dravidian race to the southern confines of Central Asia, and that this country was the home of the Nagas to which race apparently belonged the founders of the Dravidian kingdoms." It may therefore be safely concluded that the Dravidians of South India were of the same stock as the Nagas of the North, and to these tribes of Naga colonists belonged the original serpent worshipping Nayers. ³ "The same Dravidian Races," says Friedrich Ratzel, "fits only the Tamils, Telugus, and Canarese of Southern India, remoter kindred of the dark aboriginal population to whom Aryan population brought the religion of Brahma, a high civil order and of course the opportunity of extensive intermixture." The selection of the term is connected

1. The Evolution of Marriage, Letourneau, page 80.

2. The Sun and the Serpent, C. F. Oldham, page 158.

3. The Sun and the Serpent, Chapter VII, pages 162-165.

with its use in the sacred writings of the old Indians, where it is applied to the old Kshatriyas on the east coast of the Deccan who had fallen to the rank of Sudras. As a rule, however, all are called Dravidians who are not Aryan or Semitic and speak agglutinative languages like Tamil. They are distinguished by their dark colour, Mongolian features, and smooth hair. "The nucleus of the Tamil race was indeed," says Grant, "devoted to the nomad life, the fundamental institution of Turanean existence, but the hypothesis of their close connection with the population of Tibet has not attained the rank of scientific certainty." ¹

The passage, quoted above, supports the general consensus of opinion, that the Malayalam language is an offshoot of Tamil, and that the Nayers are the immigrants from the Tamil country.

It has always been a matter of controversy whether Malayalam is the mother, sister, or daughter of Tamil. The popular opinion seems to be, that it is the archaic form of Tamil before it became a written language, and this corresponds with the information derived from the Greek writers that the country was known by the name of Limurike, Tamilike or Tamil country. ²

Relying mainly on literary evidence, Mr. Kanakasabha Pillay has attributed a Mongolian origin to the whole Dravidian race of Tamils, among whom he includes the Nayers, but anthropometric results point otherwise. ³

As has been seen, many distinguished authorities are unanimously agreed that the Nayers belong to the Dravidian race with no doubt a considerable admixture of Aryan blood, but the date of their arrival in Malabar cannot be accurately determined.

It is assumed by some writers that the Aryans were conquerors who reduced *Asuras* (Dravidians) to slavery. Whatever might have been the fate of the aborigines, the *Asuras* were not subdued by the Aryans, and never became their serfs or dependants, but were converted gradually to Aryan usages by a regular fusion. Bishop Caldwell supports this view and says, that the subjugation of the Dravidians by the Aryans is

1. *Races of Mankind*, Vol. III, page 359.

2. *Malabar Law and Custom*, Introduction, page 2.

3. *The Tamils*, eighteen hundred years ago.

not borne out either by any Sanskrit authority or Dravidian traditions ; ¹ but certain legends refer to conflicts between them and the Hindu colonists of later times, and these are said to have been led by Parasurama, and the Nagas from Pātāla whom they found in possession of the country. ² The latter were not forced to divide the spoil with the Kshatriyas or warriors who elsewhere counterbalanced the power of the Brahmans, and obliged them to keep up a continual struggle in which victory alternated with defeat. These internecine dissensions gave the indigenous element a chance to recover itself by degrees, and finally gave birth to a military aristocracy called the Nayars. ³

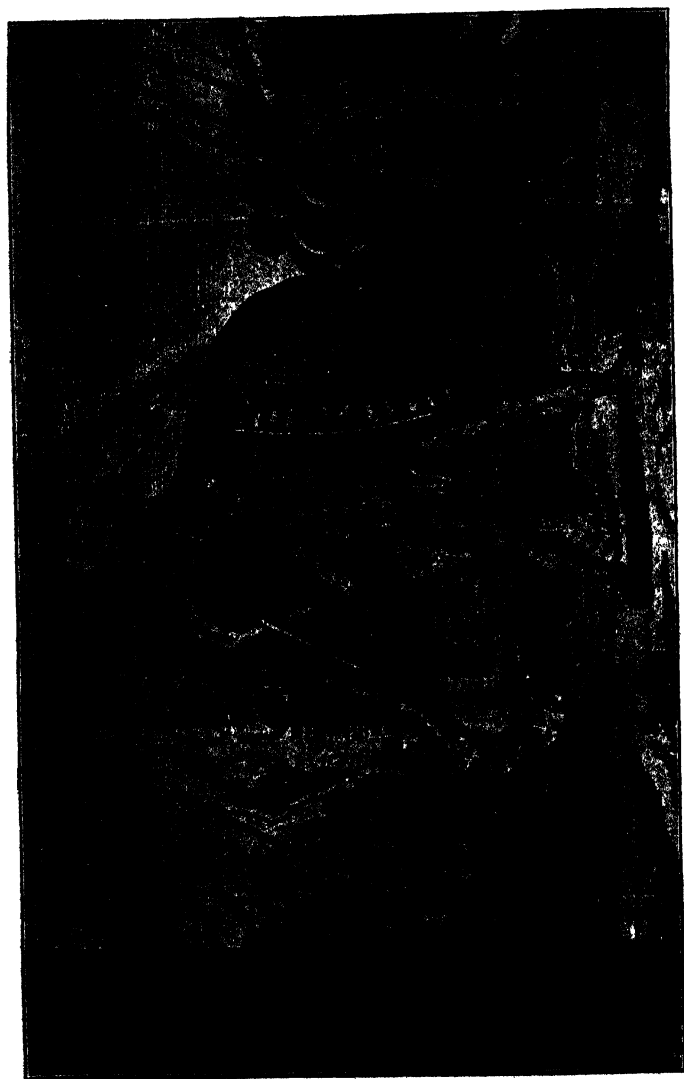
The Nayars of ancient times formed the chief militia in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore, and their valour and other fighting qualities evoked the admiration of foreigners, and inspired even the restless Portuguese poet Cameons, who described them in the following apt lines :—

The military character of the Nayars

Poliar the labouring clans were named ;
By the proud Nayars the noble rank is claimed ,
The toils of culture and of art they scorn ;
The shining falchion brandished in the right ,
Their left arm wields the target in the fight.

One of the earliest accounts of the Nayars is found in the writings of Duarte Barbosa, who described them as men of noble descent, who had to be armed as knights by the king or lord with whom they lived, and who could not call themselves Nayars until they had been so equipped as to bear arms. They were generally sent to school at the age of seven to learn all manner of athletic feats and to enable them to use their weapons. ⁴ Their sinews and joints were so stretched and anointed with the oyle *sesamus* by skillful fellows called " Panicars," who were captains in war, that they became very light and nimble ; and could " wind and twine their bodies " as if they had no bones. They cast themselves backward and forwards, high and low, to the astonishment of the beholders, and the delight in their weapon was so great that they

1. Grammar of the Dravidian Languages, Introduction, page 107.
2. The Sun and the Serpent, page 107.
3. Primitive Folk, page 107.
4. A description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar by Duarte Barbosa, page 128—129.



THE NAVAR WARRIORS OF ANCIENT TIMES

persuaded themselves, that no nation could handle it with such skill and dexterity.¹ Such trained young men became the guards of some king or lord, and so faithful and obedient were they, that they had no hesitation to die for him when required. They were the greatest and worst enemies of the Portuguese, and did a great deal of mischief to them by sea. Some of them had a naked rapier or cutlass in their right hand and a great target in their left, made of light wood, some again were armed with bows and venomous arrows upon their shoulders; and while moving about, they made a great noise by knocking the hilt of the rapier against the target in order that they might be heard. Others carried long pikes, some pecus with the match readily lighted, and had the best locks that could be found in all Europe. They knew how to use them, and the Portuguese had no advantage over them. Wherever they went, they carried their arms both by day and night.²

"They went into battle almost naked, threw javelin with equal address backward and forward, and drew the bow with such skill that their second shaft often split the first. Their extraordinary agility made them the terror of every combat in forest or jungle. On the smallest provocation they prepared themselves for death, and having done so, one would hold his ground against a hundred. Those attached to the person of the prince made it a point of honour not to survive him."³

"The military dress of the Nayar is a pair of short drawers and his peculiar weapon is an instrument with a thin but very broad blade hooked towards the edge like a bill-hook or gardener's knife, and about the length of a Roman sword. The hooked instrument, the inseparable companion of the Nayar whenever he quits his dwelling on business, pleasure or for war, has no scabbard, and is usually grasped by the right hand as an ornamental appendage during the time of peace and used for destruction in war. When the Nayar employs his 'musquet' or his bow, the weapon already described is fixed in an instant by means of a catch in the waist belt, with the flat part of the blade diagonally across his back; and it can be

Their military dress
and mode of fighting.

1. Johnstone in his relations of the most famous kingdom in the world, 1611.

2. Voyages of Linschoten to the East Indies,

3. Graul Reise nach Ost Indien,

disengaged as quickly whenever he drops his 'musquet' in the wood or slings it across his shoulders for the purpose of rushing to close encounter with this terrible instrument."¹

Cavalry was unknown; there was only infantry. The soldiers wore a silk cloth wound round the head and carried swords, shields, lances and bows. The king had an umbrella formed of the leaves of a tree and fixed on to the end of a cane, for protection from the sun. There was no standard. When they were in battle, and one army was at a distance from the other, two ranges of a cross-bow, the king would ask the Brahmans to go to the camp of the enemy and tell the knights to let one hundred of his men fight with the same number on his side, when both the parties would go to the central space to do so. The fighting continued even for three days, when blows were given on the head and at the legs. After the death of some men on either side, the survivors were directed to return to their camps. If any more fighting was desired, the same course was adopted. Sometimes the king rode on an elephant, and sometimes the Nayars carried him. The pay of a soldier was four carlini a month, and in time of war half a ducat.

The Nayars whom the king received in his service were never dismissed, however old they might be. They received their pay and rations, and the king granted favours to whosoever had served him well. If, however, they were left unpaid for some years, some four or five hundred of the aggrieved would rise up and go in a body to the palace, and send word to the king that they would go away dismissed, because he did not give them food. The king would then beg them to have patience, pay them at once either the whole amount due to them or a part of it with a promise to pay the balance at an early date. The king generally satisfied them, considering it a disgrace that they should go away to serve under another ruler. Even in times of war they were not at liberty to touch any peasant, or eat and drink with him in his house without penalty. The king was bound to support the mother and family of any soldier who died in war. He also treated, at his own expense, any soldier who was wounded in battle.²

1. Abbe Dubois *People of India*.

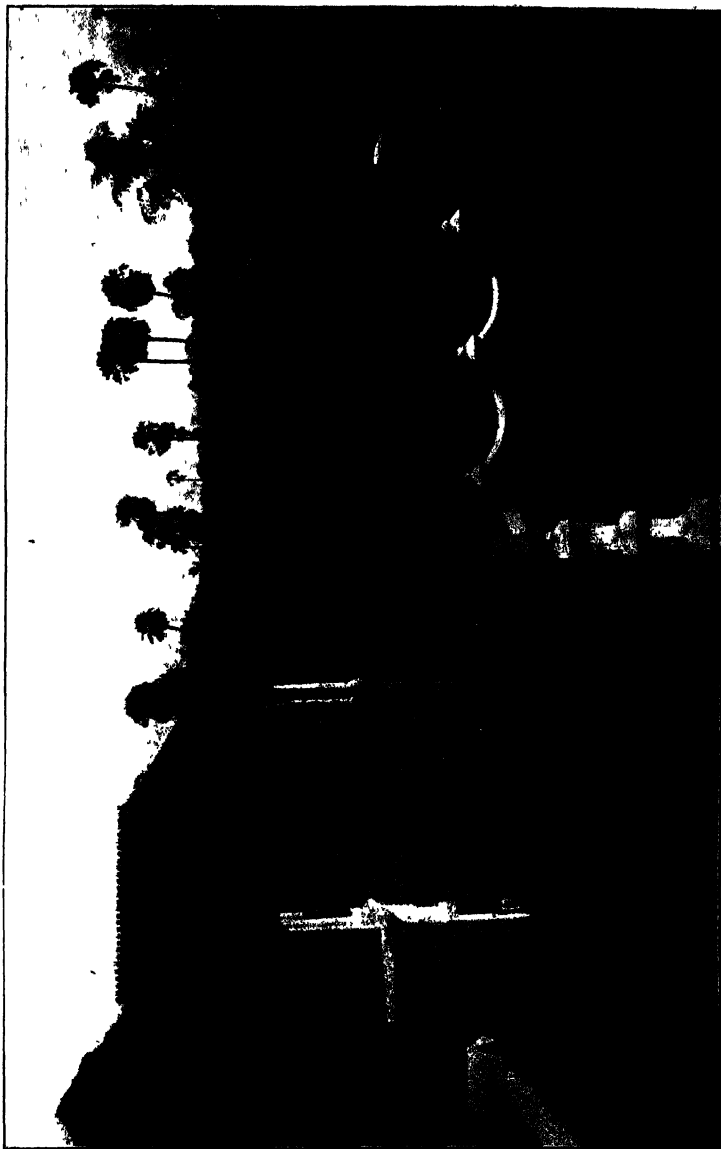
2. *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar*, page 130-131, Duarte Barbosa.



THE WEAPONS OF THE OLD NAYAR WARRIORS.

Thus did the Nayers as a warlike race play a very important part in the history of Kerala during the middle ages. Their weapons and modes of fighting thereafter underwent many changes under the influence of the Portuguese and the Dutch, who introduced western arms and tactics into the then existing art of war, when also the Nayers proved equal to the occasion. Labourdanais, who distinguished himself in the storming of the little town of Mahe, bore the brunt of many a Nayar onslaught, and had therefore opportunities of forming a just estimate of their work. Major Munro, who was instrumental in the storming of that little town in 1761, met the Nayar troops in the field, and thus described their mode of fighting: "One may as well look for the needle in a bottle of hay as any of them in the day-time, they lurking behind the sand-banks and bushes, except when we are marching towards the fort, when they appear like bees out in the month of June besides which they point their guns well and fire them also." Dr. Buchanan, who under the orders of Lord Wellesley journeyed through Mysore, Malabar and Canara, spoke of them in the same strain. When Hyder Ali invaded Malabar, they committed terrible havoc on the Mysoreans. "The Nayers are the military class of Malabar," writes Col. Wilkes, who was struck with their pluck and agility. "They are perhaps not exceeded by any nation on earth in their high spirit of independence, but like all persons stimulated by that spirit without the direction of discipline, their efforts are uncertain, capricious and desultory." The last event in which they showed their military valour was in the rebellion of the Pychee Raja of Kurumbranad. With the fall of the Portuguese and the Dutch, and the conquest and annexation of Malabar by the English East India Company, the Nayers have almost lost their warlike characteristics, through successive generations of peace and have now become attached to the land. Even writing in 1855, Captain Drury contrasts the Nayar's effeminate disposition with the martial valour of his forefathers. He does not bear transplantation. He now prefers a quiet swing in the verandah or a lounge under a tree, chewing betel. Unlike his ancestor, he is becoming more and more domesticated. The Nayar population has greatly increased and a large majority of them are not very affluent, and among these physical deterioration is noticeable.

The Nayars, like other Malayali Hindus, are not lovers of towns, but generally live in detached houses, with large compounds and good gardens. The strict customs of caste purity and impurity former times made them desert places where they were liable to be polluted by the members of very low castes. They generally select the site of a house either on the margin of a fertile valley or ravine with bright green fields of rice in front. The entrance to their compounds, which are often somewhat raised off the ground by laterite or mud walls, is at some little distance from the main house, and consists of a door at the centre of a strong gate-way, which is the first that attracts one's attention as the dwelling is approached. The gate is quaintly constructed, and the surroundings are exceptionally neat and tidy. It is also essential that a stair or a ladder should lead up to it from the bank of a green level paddy flat, reminding one of the days when security of life and property depended upon one's own ability to laugh a siege to scorn when a Nayar house was his castle, and when at the gate-way were posted retainers to keep watch and ward against enemies. Seats for them to rest on, right and left, both outside and inside, a solid quaintly carved door and lintel, a room accessible by a ladder from inside, with windows, or openings whence shots were discharged on lawless intruders, and finally a thatched roof, complete the characteristics of a gate house. Permission to build such a gate house was a rare privilege and had to be obtained from the rulers, but with a change in the order of things, this restriction has, like many others of the kind, ceased to exist. The plan and other details of the structure of a Nayar house are determined in strict conformity with the principles of the ancient Hindu science of architecture based on astrology. ¹ A compound or garden is first selected and measured out into a square plot and is then divided into four parts, imaginary lines running lengthwise and breadthwise through the centre or middle of it. Either the north-east or south-west portion is chosen for the site of a house, the former being preferred to the latter. The south-east corner is generally set apart as the family burial-ground. There are again special spots selected for the well, tank, cow-shed, serpent grove and the family deity. The selection of the site for the house



A TYPICAL ARISTOCRATIC NAYAR HOUSE.

partly guided by the influence of the monsoon. In regard to the serpent grove or religious shrine, a square plot just in the middle of the south-west portion is considered the most auspicious. A typical Nayar house is quadrangular, with an open space (*mittam*) in the centre; the western portion of it is the granary, while the rest of it is partitioned into rooms. The northern portion comprises the store-room and the kitchen at the western and the eastern extremities, with the dining room in the middle, while the western and eastern portions are kept as open halls for gatherings on important occasions. The house so constructed must face the rising sun—the east—and yet rather inconsistently it is called the *patinjattupura* or the western roof or building. The reason of this is that the *patinjattu muri*—the central chamber or the honoured guest chamber in the house, sanctuary of the ancestors of its occupants—must be so placed as to admit of entrance through its doorway the sun's earliest rays. Behind one or more of the rooms above mentioned is a *chaippu* forming a kind of enclosed verandah room. Another type most commonly met with consists of a portico serving as a reception-hall, the other portions of the building corresponding in details, more or less, with the quadrangular edifice just described. The rigid adherence to the science of architecture is confined not only to the Nayers and other high caste-men, but also to the generality of the Native Christians and Mahomedans who, before construction, always consult some expert in the choice of a proper site and the formation of a ground plan of the house. Misfortunes or even calamities are often attributed to the violation of these principles, and very often a newly built house is either altered to remedy the defects or even pulled down. There are again houses, where the two types are combined. The huts of the poor classes consist generally of one or two small, dark and ill-ventilated rooms with a kitchen at one end, and a verandah either in front or on all sides of the main building. With the increase of population, and with the demand for more houses, the old notions and *sastraic* injunctions are being overlooked as a matter of necessity, and the old fashioned houses are displaced by those erected on sound sanitary principles. The wood-work of the buildings is solid and substantial, and is in some cases beautifully carved. The walls are generally of laterite, brick or mud, and roofs which till

recently were thatched are now being tiled with tiles of European pattern manufactured either locally or in Mangalore. In these days of comparative peace and security of life and property from marauders and free-booters, the necessity for massive structures has ceased to exist, and, coupled with this, the improved notions of architecture, derived from an easy intercourse with more civilised centres, the rapid progress of education, and with it a better knowledge of, and regard for, sanitation and hygiene, have wrought remarkable changes in the construction of buildings, so that a better class of houses, well built, airy, and commodious, is displacing the old ones with their small, dark and ill-ventilated rooms.

As part of the surroundings of the dwellings in the same compound, there are frequently seen a cattle shed, an excavated tank for bathing purposes, often full of fish and water lilies, a well so arranged as to admit of water being drawn directly from it to the kitchen, an out-house (*matam*) for the Brahman travellers or visitors, and, lastly, a small edifice for the family deity. The gardens surrounding the houses are adorned with mango and jack trees, immense bananas, groves of cocoanut and areca palms and various kinds of flowers. Thus, in most places, their houses, which are occupied by fine types of humanity, (well made men and shapely women), are situated beneath the grateful shade of magnificent avenues of trees.

Four hundred years ago, a Portuguese traveller, writing on the subject, remarks upon the Nayar houses as being scrupulously clean and neat. Without any exaggeration it may be said that they are proverbially so, and the women are either naturally endowed with a taste, or are trained from early childhood, to keep the houses and everything therein neat and clean. Those of the richer and middle classes are in these days furnished with articles of European manufacture, and all their domestic utensils, for daily use, are made either of bell-metal, copper or brass, all well cleaned and washed early every morning.

The furniture of the poorer classes is very simple; a metal pot with a spout, a few metal plates and saucers, a few metal pans of different sizes, a spittoon of brass, a few mats, a knife, a cot or two, a betel box, and a few wooden bins for grains, are nearly all the requirements of a household in this respect.

The house itself is called by several names according to the occupant's caste, that of an ordinary Nayar being a *veedu*

or *bhavanam*, while the man in authority dwells in an *idam*, and the Raja in a *kovilakam* or *kottaram*. A separate name for each *tarawad* or family is peculiar to this coast.

There are some superstitious beliefs entertained by the Nayers as well as other high caste-men, in the selection of the site for a house and compound, the quality of the soil, the site of the tank, well, cow-shed, and the edifice for the family deity; and as an account of these will be of some ethnographic interest, it is given below:—

The best site should abound with milky trees full of fruits and flowers; its boundary should be of a quadrangular form, level and smooth with a sloping declivity towards the east, producing a hard sound with a stream running from left to right, of an agreeable odour, fertile, and of an uniform colour, containing a great quantity of soil, producing water when dug to the height of a man's arm raised above his head, and situated in a region of moderate temperature. The ground possessed of qualities directly opposite to those mentioned above is the worst, and that which has a mixed nature is of the middling quality.¹

The site to be avoided is described in a special manner as follows:—That which has the form of a circle, or a semicircle, or containing three, five or six angles, or resembling a trident or shaped like the back of a fish, the back of an elephant, or a turtle, or the face of a cow, etc., situated opposite to any of the intermediate quarters abounding with human skulls, stones or worms, ant-hills, bones, slimy earth, decayed wood, coals, dilapidated wells, subterraneous pits, fragments of tiles, limestones, ashes, husks of corns and exposed to the wafted effluvia of curds, oil, honey, dead bodies, and fishes; such a spot should be avoided on every account.

In regard to colour and taste, ground with smell like that of ghee and with sweet taste is good for Brahmans; that with the colour and smell of blood and with an astringent taste, for Kshatriyas; that with yellow colour, smell of boiled rice and bitter taste, for Vaisyas; and that with dark colour, smell of toddy and taste of cow-dung, for Sudras.

There is also a test for the selection of a site by lighting a lamp in a hole. A hole measuring one cubit in depth,

1. Ramraz's essay on the architecture of the Hindus, London, pp. 15-22.

having been well plastered with mud, a saucer of unbaked earth filled with ghee and four lighted wicks is placed therein, for testing the quality of the soil. If the wicks burn brightly in all four directions, the ground is fit for all the castes including Brahmans and other caste-men. If the wicks do not burn, it will not suit any of the four castes.

If the house is constructed by a person in the month of Medam (April-May) he gets disease; in Edavam (May-June) he gets money and jewel; in Mithunam (June-July) there will be death; in Ashad or Karkadakam (July-August) he gets servants and jewels, but no beasts; in Chingam (August-September) friendship; in Kanni (September-October) loss of friends; in Thulam (October-November) death of his wife; in Vrischigam (November-December) money and crops; in Dhanu (December-January) he will become a devotee; in Makaram (January-February) there will be fear from enemies and thieves, but the builder will know of profits from many directions; in Kumbham (February-March), danger of fires; in Meenam (March-April) gold and sons.

The following asterisms are auspicious for commencing a building:—Aswini, Rohini, Mulam, the three Uttaras, Mrigashirsha, Swathi, Hasta, Anuradha. All days of the week, except Sunday and Tuesday, are auspicious. A house should be commenced at auspicious moments known as *muhurtas*: Sveda, Mitra, Mahendra, Gandharva, Rohini and also Raja Sāvitra. The erection of the pillars should be performed at auspicious *lagnas*, moments when the sun and the moon are favourable; other moments should be avoided.

Building operations should not be commenced in the rainy season nor at the end of the third part of the dark fortnight, and in the first and second part of the bright fortnight. Of the phases of the moon, the fourth, ninth, and fourteenth should be avoided. Tuesday is also to be omitted: for working on that day brings injury or bad luck. Days marked with dangers natural or any other, arising out of the earth, sky, or heavenly bodies and other calamities, such as the death of a friend, and those made ominous by the influence of some planets are considered inauspicious. A well informed person should do his work when the moon and the stars are favourable.

Auspicious times for
the construction of houses.

Inauspicious times

The construction of a house on the left or back of a Vishnu temple, on the right of a Siva or Durga temple, or by the right side of a Sastha temple, will cause calamities to the occupants; but that on the opposite side will bring prosperity.

Houses should not be constructed near temples, paddy flats, hermitages, the sea, hills, or cow-shed; if constructed near temples, they should be lower in height than the religious edifices.

Houses, constructed on a dry-land (*paramba*) with an elevation to the north-west, will last for eighteen years; and if on an elevation towards the east, south and south-east, a hundred years; if, however, they are built on a ground with an elevation to the north-east, they will last for a thousand, if to the west, twelve years, and to the north, eight years. Houses built on grounds sloping to the north with *athi* (*Ficus racemosa*) near them, those sloping to the east with *araya* (*Ficus religiosa*) growing thereon, those with an inclination to the west, with *Peral* (*Ficus Indica*) growing thereon, and grounds with *ithi* (*Ficus Venosa*) are fit for the occupation of the members of the four castes.

The following trees, namely, *elanni* (*Mimusops Elangi*) or *peral* (*Ficus Indica*) growing on the eastern side of a house, *athi* (*Ficus racemosa*) or *puli* (*Tamarindus Indica*) on the southern side, *araya* (*Ficus religiosa*), *pala* (*Echites scholaris*) or milk plant on the west, *nda* tree (*Trichosanthes anguina*) and *ithi* (*Ficus Venosa*) on the north, will bring prosperity to the occupants. Jack and mango trees cocoanut and areca palms may grow on all sides of a house. *Araya* (*Ficus religiosa*) growing on the eastern side of a house will cause it to take fire, while *peral* on the western side will give cause for fear from enemies. *Athi* on the northern side of the house will bring on abdominal complaints to the occupants. *Araya* growing near a house must be cut off, unless the distance between the house and the tree be twice the height of the latter. A cow-shed may be erected either to the east or the west of the main building; and a similar one to the south of it for bullocks and buffaloes. There are certain ceremonies performed both at the commencement of construction and at its various stages, as well as before the occupation of a house, a detailed description of which will be found in the account of the Brahmans. ¹

Internal structure of
the caste.

Caste assigns to each individual his profession or calling; and when once the system is handed down from father to son, and from generation to generation, it is found impossible for any person or his descendants to change for any other the condition of life which the law assigns to him. The most far-sighted and prudent men in ancient times probably found such an institution to be the only means for maintaining a system of civilisation amongst a people endowed with the peculiar characteristics of the Hindus.

The important principle which guided all ancient legislators was, that no man in the commonwealth should be left without work. At the same time, they knew that the people were indolent by nature. They were further aware of the fact that, unless every individual was duly provided with some work, for which he might be best fitted, the social fabric must necessarily fall to pieces. The law-givers therefore established durable and inviolable rules for the different castes constituting the Hindu race, the violation of which brings divine displeasure, and meets with severe punishment both in this world and in the world to come.

It is some such guiding principle that is involved in the division of the Nayers into various sub-castes. In Kerala the Brahmans seem to have been instrumental in the formation of castes to some extent; for, it is found that some castes have to do services in temples to Brahmans. Distinct professional groups in the tribal organisations may have existed there before the advent of these people, who probably found it easy to make a ready adjustment of the social groups, and thought it advisable to assign to them well defined occupations. Therefore, the original institution of the caste system does not merit any serious condemnation.

Some are of opinion that it is not quite correct to say that the Nayers are a caste, and that it would be better to call them a tribe, as Bhattacharya has done in his 'Castes and Sects'. I am however inclined to think that the name is not quite appropriate, and that they do form a caste of people, known as Malayali Sudras.

In regard to subdivisions, there is no uniformity. So numerous and varied are they in Cochin, Malabar, and Travancore, that titles of distinction that have been conferred upon

certain families from time to time are being looked upon as sub-castes. *Jātinirṇayam*, a Malayalam work of some authority, which gives an account of Malayali castes, limits the number of subdivisions to eighteen, fourteen of which belong to the high caste Sudras, the remaining four being of low caste Sudras. In the last Census Report of the Cochin State, the same number is kept up with slight modifications, to which I am not inclined to agree. It is not possible at this stage to state the exact number of subdivisions, and the following are those that have come under my personal investigation in the State :—

1. *Kiriyattil Nayers*.—They form the highest of all the Nayar subdivisions in the Cochin State as well as south Malabar. The word *kiriyattil* or *kiriyam* is said to be derived from the Sanskrit, *graham*, which means a house. The derivation is doubtful. The members of this subdivision are believed to have been the descendants of the early Brahmans in their union with the Deva, Gandharva and Rakshasa women brought into Kerala by Parasurama, and their duty has been primarily to serve them. The members of the aristocratic class, who still bear the titles of Panikkar, Kurup, Kaimal, Kartha, Menon, and Menokki belong to this class; in this class are included the old *nādvāzhis*, and *desavāzhis*—rulers of *nāds* and *desams*—the military leaders, Pattola Mepons and other *sthānis* or titled persons. Being superior to the members of other subdivisions, the *Kiriyattil* Nayers can cook for all others. The Nayers of this class are, according to current tradition, connected with the sixty-four families of Vellalas, whom Dr. Oppert has tried to identify with the Pallavas.

2. *Illattu Nayers*.—They are known in Cochin and South Malabar also as Sudra Nayers. They are par excellence the attendants and retainers of the Nambuthiris. In many parts of the State and in Malabar, they have, by close contact with the Nambuthiris, fashioned many of their personal habits after the truly Brahmanical style, and are, on that account, classed among the high class Nayers. Very seldom does a Nambuthiri woman go outside without being accompanied by a maid-servant or *dasi* belonging to this class, and every woman of this class is her constant attendant and is indispensable for her various ceremonies. They are, I understand, found very largely in Travancore also, where they form

the highest class. There are many who profess to belong to certain Nambuthiri *illams*, such as the Azhavancheri and other *illams*. They are obliged to be strict vegetarians owing to their service in the Nambuthiri families.

3. *Swarupattil Nayars*.—The members of this class render services to the Kshatriyas. There are, it is said, three minor subdivisions, namely, *Pindiyánmar*, *Patindluvittukar* and *Chitayans*. The members of the first class serve as menials in the houses of Kshatriyas; those of the second have to supply them with everything necessary for the performance of all kinds of ceremonies; and those of the third serve them during pollution. They appear to correspond to the Chárnavar and Sudras. Swarupattil Nayars or Swarupakkár (from *swarupam*, princely house) are so called because of their service in princely houses or Kshatriya families. They are next in rank to *Illakkars*.

4. *Agattu and Purattu Chárna Nayars*.—The Chárna Nayars or Chárnavar who are mostly immigrants from Malabar include the two subdivisions, Agattu Chárnavar and Purattu Chárnavar, “inside and outside retainers,” respectively. There are two explanations of the terms. According to one, the Purattu Chárnavar are the armed retainers of the various chieftains, while the Agattu Chárnavar are the personal and domestic servants. According to the other explanation, the distinction refers to their position at *yágams* (sacrifices) at which it is said that various duties inside the *yágasala* or sacrificial pandal are to be performed by the Agattu Chárna Nayars, while the Purattu Chárna Nayars remain on guard outside. In point of social precedence, the Purattu Chárnavar are ranked superior to the Agattu Chárnavar, probably because the latter do not belong to any of the fighting clans. A woman of the former may mate with a man of the latter, but not *vice versa*. Only the men of the two subdivisions may eat together, but the women may mate with men of their own clan or of any other or with a Nambuthiri. The men of this class form *sambandhams* in South Malabar with the Kiriyaattil women. The caste-men affix the title of Nayar after their names. There are many of this class found in the State.

5. *Menókki and Pattóla Menon*.—Men of these castes serve as accountants in temples and in aristocratic families.

The above two subdivisions are mere titles and the members belonging to them are not numerous in the State.

6. *Mārūr*.—The members of this subdivision act as drummers and musicians in temples and also render important services to Brahmans and Kshatriyas in their ceremonies.

7. *Pīdamangalam Nayars*.—The members of this clan are engaged in escorting processions in temples. Some also act as sweepers in them. There are not, I am informed, very many in the State belonging to this subdivision.

8. *Pallichūn Nayars*.—These are palanquin-bearers of the Brahmans and Kshatriyas.

9. *Vattekāḍ Nayars*.—They are the pressers of oil for use in temples. It has been remarked by some that the Vattekāḍ Nayars are not always admitted to be true Nayars and that in some places they are called Vāniyans (oil mongers.) The subdivision is endogamous. There are two minor subdivisions, the members of which neither interdine nor intermarry.

10. *Chempukotti Nayars*.—These are the workers in copper for temples and Brahman houses. The following tradition regarding them is interesting :—

“Chempukottis or Chempóttis (copper tappers) are copper-workers whose traditional business is the roofing of the *srikóvil* or inner shrine of the temple with that metal. They are said to have originally formed part of the *Kammālan* or artisan community. When the great temple of Taliparamba was completed, it was purified on a scale of unprecedented grandeur, no less than thousand Brahmans being employed. What was their dismay when the ceremony was well forward, to see a Chempukotti coming from the *srikóvil*, where he had been putting the finishing touches to the roof! This appeared to involve a re-commencement of the whole tedious and costly ritual; and the Brahmans gave vent to their feelings of despair, when a vision from Heaven re-assured them. And thereafter Chempótties have been raised in the social scale, and are not regarded as a polluting caste.”¹

11. *Otattu Nayars*.—They are the tile and thatch makers for temples and Brahman houses.

12. *Edachéri Nayars*.—They are the makers and sellers of dairy produce.

13. *Anduran Nayars*.—These Nayars are the manufacturers of earthenware for use in temples.

14. *Attikurusi Nayars*.—They are the priests who officiate at funeral ceremonies for all sub-castes above them.

In respect of the fourteen subdivisions of the high caste *Sudrás*, it must be said that the non-military classes, namely, the Otattu Nayars, Chempukotti, Anduran, Pallichán and Vattékád Nayars, have to be treated as an intermediate class of *Sudrás*, because there is neither interdining nor intermarriage between the members of these subdivisions and those treated as high caste *Sudrás*; but they are classed among the high caste *Sudrás* on account of their services in temples, which give them the privilege to enter them and bathe in public tanks.

Under the head of low caste *Sudrás* are included four sub-castes, namely Tharakans, Velakkathalavans, Veluthédans, and Cháliyans, who pollute other Nayars by touch, and who are on that account called low caste *Sudrás*. Pollution by touch appears to be the basis for the above classification, and on this principle, the three castes except the Tharakans are treated as low caste *Sudrás*; for, their touch pollutes all castes above them. The Tharakans had been a trading class, but they have now taken to other professions. They are a Tamil class and are the least Malayáli to be brought on a level with the high caste *Sudrás*, though in their customs they are almost like the latter. A similar process of assimilation has been and is still going on among some of the Tamil castes of the Chittur Taluk as well as elsewhere, by which the members of such castes are developing themselves into Nayars.

The Nayars affix to their names one of the following titles, the origin and significance of which are given below:—

Titles

1. *Kartha*.—The word means a 'doer', and appears to have been used as a title by some of the old Madura kings. The rulers of Cochin are said to have confirmed this title on some influential Nayar families, and made them petty chieftains subject to their paramountcy. All the *Karthás* belong to the *Illam* division of the Nayar caste. Among the old families in the Cochin State still possessing this title are Chéránellur *Kartha* near Ernakulam, Kódasséri *Kartha* near Chálakudi, and Kuzhupilli *Kartha*.

2. *Kaimal* (from *kai*, hand, meaning power).—The Kaimals were, according to tradition, the fighting masters of Cochin and Malabar. At one time, they were in charge of the royal treasury, which by respected custom could not be visited by the Rajas themselves, except in the presence of the Kaimals. "Neither could they", says Barbosa, "take anything out of it without a great necessity, and by the council of this person and certain others." They were also the chieftains or rulers of certain localities, owing a kind of allegiance to the ruler of the State. Many of the Kaimal families are still in existence, such as the Koratti Kaimal, Cherukayil Kaimal and others.

3. *Kurup*.—This is also a title attached to the names of many Nayar families and is also assumed by other castes. Some of them were military instructors (Kalari Kurups) in the old royal families of Cochin and in North Malabar. 1

4. *Panikkar*.—The word comes from *pani*, meaning work. The Panikkars originally kept *kalaris* (fencing or gymnastic schools with a sort of private chapel attached to it) in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore. They are spoken of by the Portuguese writers as the strength of the country. They are no longer in charge of *kalaris* but are now engaged in other occupations. Some are experts in sword play.

5. *Nayar*.—The Pathináyirathil (10,000) and Muppathináyirathil (30,000) Nayars who constitute the forty thousand belonged to the Kiriya and Chárna castes. The title was generally conferred in Malabar by kings or feudal chiefs, but in the State it was mostly assumed by the Sudrás who had not received other titles.

6. *Menon*.—The word is a contraction of *mél*, above, and *avan*, he, and means a superior person. The title was given to many Nayar families or individuals by the rulers of Cochin. As soon as a person received this title, he was presented with an *óla* (palmyra leaf) and an iron style for writing thereon. This is symbolical of the profession of an accountant. Even now, in Cochin and British Malabar, each *amsom* or revenue village has a writer or an accountant who is called a Ménón. The title of *Menókki* means one who looks over or superintends, and is found only in British

1. Ethnographic appendices, page 131.

Malabar, where it is a creation of the Zamorin.

7. *Asín*.—The word means a teacher. He is also a head-man (*Karayinnél Asín*), who has certain social functions in connection with the marriage and other ceremonies.

8. *Achan*.—The word means father. It is the title of the Palghat Rajas, the ministers of the Calicut and Cochin Rajas (*Mángát Achan* and *Páliyát Achan*), and also of several other old Nayar chiefs.

9. *Mannátiyar*.—This is the title of certain aristocratic families in the Chittur Taluk near Palghat. The word is derived from *man*, earth, and *nétiyavar*, earners.

Among the high caste Sudras marriage is hypergamous, while the low caste Sudras are endogamous.

Marriage prohibitions

This is the general rule, though exceptions may sometimes be found. A Nayar is allowed to cohabit with a woman lower in the social scale than himself, but his womenkind are prohibited from exercising the same liberty. This is called the *Anulómam* and *Prathilómam*. Dr. Gundert derives *Anulomam* from *Anu* with *lómam* *rómam* - the hair, going with the hair or grain. So *Prathilómam* means going against the hair or grain. According to this usage, a Nayar woman, consorting with a man of the higher caste, follows the hair, purifies the blood, raises the progeny in social estimation. By cohabitation with a man of lower subdivision, clan or caste, she is guilty of *Prathilómam*; and if the difference of caste were admittedly great, she would be turned out of her family to prevent the whole family being boycotted.¹

The rule of *Anulómam* and *Prathilómam* is everywhere observed with great strictness. In many cases, Nambuthiris, Embráns, Póttis and Tamil Brahmans, Kshatriyas and

1. Alliances between the people of North Malabar and South Malabar seem to be extremely rare. It is partly because of the principle of *Prathilómam* and perhaps partly that the Nayar women cannot cross the Korapuzha which marks the boundary between the two. Nor can the women of the extreme north of North Malabar cross the river between it and South Canara. The reason is said to be that the Kolatheri Raja so commanded owing to the fear that was entertained about their being captured and taken as wives by the Arabs. Similarly, till about fifty years ago the Nayar women from North Travancore and Cochin were prohibited from going beyond Quilon southward. These customs are being overlooked by the educated members of the community and it may almost be said that the custom has begun to die out.

Further, in the extreme south of South Malabar a high caste bride mates with a low caste bridegroom on the *Prathilómam* already explained. The husband cannot touch her without pollution, when she is engaged in taking meals. In the case of Nambuthiris, the same custom is in force and they cannot be seen, while engaged in religious ceremonies or taking meals. With the spread of education, official status, wealth, power, and influence, many of these time-honoured customs are fast disappearing.

Ambalavásis form alliances with Nayar women, but the latter and their children cannot touch their husbands and fathers without polluting them. The children of this union belong to the mother's family. In the clan system, descent was at first reckoned in the female line; consequently, uterine ties alone constituted kinship. The father was not regarded as related even to his children, and not considered as a member of the family. In this system all the children bear the clan name, and the clan name becomes the test of blood relationship. But the moment the descent is recognised through the male, the clan system breaks down. Among the Nayers the kinship is still reckoned through the female line.

Marriage is endogamous among the low caste Sudrás. The following restrictions are however in force among all classes of Sudrás. There cannot be intermarriages between the descendants of any female ancestor. It is strictly prohibited even in the case of two persons belonging to the same *taravíd* or family whose relationship cannot be traced to its origin, but is only traditional. A man cannot marry the sister of his deceased wife. The custom is more changing. A man cannot marry from the family of his deceased wife, but is now limited to the *thárvazhi* to which his wife belonged. Even this is now being overlooked.

CHAPTER II.

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THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

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A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

According to Nayar ideas the most desirable bride for a young man is the daughter of his maternal uncle.

There are two forms of marriage in vogue among the Nayars, namely, the *Thālikettu kalyānam* (tāli tying ceremony), and the *Sambandham* (the customary nuptial union of man and woman), the first of which is performed for every girl before puberty, and the second, the real adult marriage, is celebrated after she comes of age. The *tāli* tying for every girl is compulsory before she arrives at maturity, ¹ and the omission or neglect of it will place her and her family under a ban; for, it is considered a religious impurity for a girl to attain puberty before the performance of this ceremony. There is however a tendency for these restrictions to be overlooked now-a-days.

In every *taravād* or family, the ceremony is performed once in ten or twelve years, and all the girls down to the baby in the cradle, who have not already undergone this ceremony, are married in this fashion for the sake of economy. When, in a family, the *tāli* tying ceremony has to be performed for a girl or a number of girls, the *kūranavan* or senior member thereof, at a meeting of the friends and relatives of the family, sends for the local astrologer, who after examining the horoscope or horoscopes of the girl or girls determines the auspicious hour for it as well as for certain subsidiary rites

1. As a rule, the *tāli* tying ceremony is performed before the girl attains puberty, but sometimes it is performed afterwards. In the latter case, the girl is prohibited from entering temples during the period intervening between the attainment of puberty and the *tāli* tying ceremony.

which precede or follow it. ¹ Information is then given to the relatives, and friends of the family regarding the performance of the ceremony on a certain date, when invitations are sent around to those that should attend the wedding. The ceremony then opens with a fixing of the post ² for the erection of a pandal, which is tastefully decorated and in which the ceremony is performed. The male members of the village are invited and treated to a feast followed by the distribution of betel leaf, arecanuts and tobacco for chewing. ³ In the Cochin State, every time the ceremony is performed in a privileged family, or in one wishing to obtain privileges, a member thereof visits His Highness the Raja with presents (*thirumulkázhcha*), and requests his permission for the celebration. Similar presents are also made to the Nambuthiri *jenmies* by their tenants and others attached to the *illams*. It is interesting to note that certain privileges, such as sitting on grass mats, having a procession with an elephant, beating of drums, firing of pop-guns, worshipping of the Sun on a platform especially constructed, have often to be obtained from the ruler of the State. ⁴ Then follows the *Ashtamangalyam Vekkal* (procession to the marriage pandal to place the eight auspicious things, namely rice, paddy, tender leaves of cocoanut trees, an arrow, a looking glass, a well washed cloth, lighted fire, and a small wooden box called *cheppu*) which is a formal beginning of the ceremony, or if necessary, earlier still, and for which a *Bráhmāni* is invited. On the night previous to the ceremony, the girl neatly dressed and adorned in her best is taken by her caste-women to a reserved spot in the house (*Patinnáttu Iruttal*, seating on the western side), where some ceremonies are gone through, and the *Bráhmāni* or *Pushpinj* entertains the party with her songs, chiefly *Purānic*. Soon after, the girl and the female members of the family, dressed in gay attire and decked with costly ornaments, come out in procession to the pandal where the

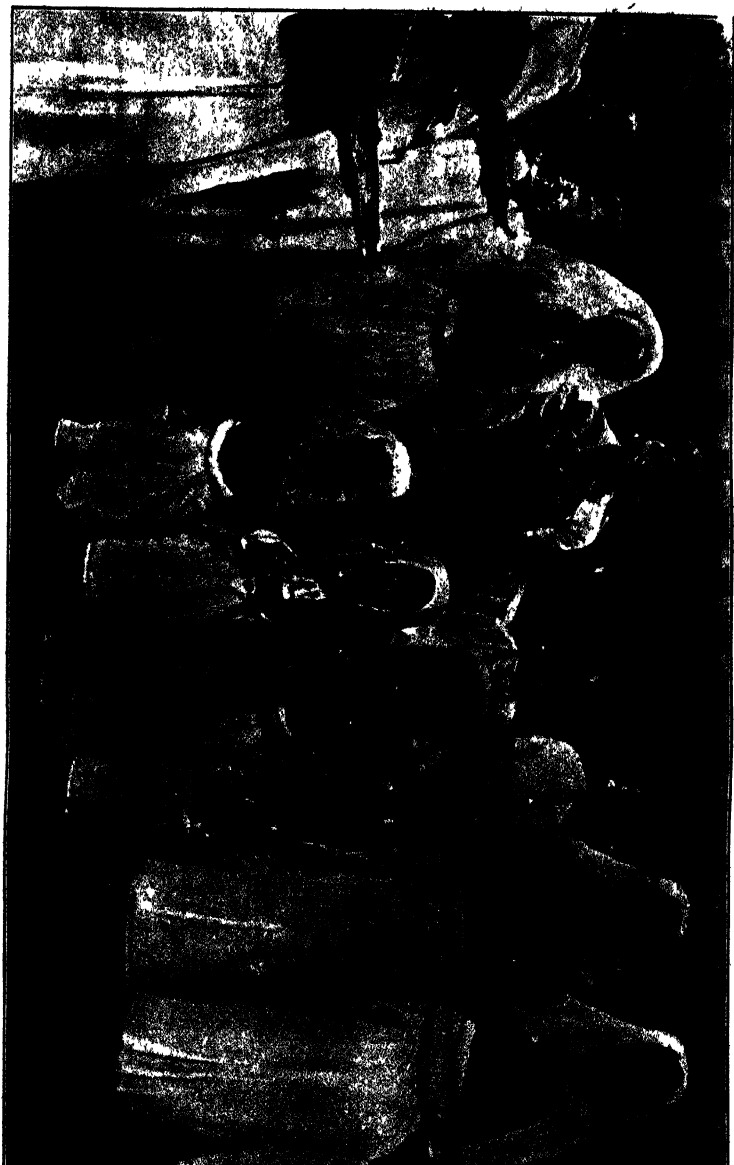
1. The village astrologer is entitled to be formally invited. He makes certain predictions at the sight of the messenger about the results of the marriage. When he arrives at the gate of the house, he is formally received, and he makes certain other predictions from the movement of the flame of a lamp as to the result, happy or otherwise, of the marriage. In the latter case, he suggests some remedies.

2. For this also an auspicious hour is fixed by the astrologer.

3. A few important members sit together and prepare a kind of list for the purchase of provisions for the feast and other expenses.

4. Such privileges are permanently enjoyed by certain aristocratic families. Some obtain them on marriage occasions.

same formality is again gone through. The girl has to sit with her face veiled. After going round the pandal, three, five or seven times, a cutting of the jasmine placed in a brass vessel is carried by the Elayad or family priest, who, mounted on an elephant with it, and accompanied by a grand procession with the beating of drums, a display of fire-works, and the joyous shouts of men and women, goes to the nearest Bhagavathi or other temple, where the plant and the *táli* (marriage badge) placed in a vessel are consecrated by the performance of a *puja* by the temple priest. The party then return home with it. The night previous to the ceremony is marked by a feast called *Athúzhām*. Next day, the girl who is again properly dressed and well adorned, is led to the reserved spot or the central chamber in which are placed a lighted brass lamp and a vessel full of rice. A short time before the auspicious hour, she goes round the pandal or shed three times, and is led on by the *Brúhmani* to the worship of the Sun (*Adithyane Thozheekal*). In some cases this is done on the bare ground, and in others in a shed provided with a ceiling of plank previously erected for the occasion. After this the girl is seated in front of the shed and somewhat on its western side. The bridegroom or the *táli* tier, who may be a Thirumulpād in the case of several girls, is invited and lodged in a house near the bride's family, where he and his friends are treated to a feast called *Ayal* or *Ayini Oonu*. A short time before the auspicious hour, the bridegroom, armed with a sword and neatly dressed, starts in procession with his party to the bride's house, where, at the gate, he is received by a few male members with *ashtamangalyam* in their hands and seated conspicuously in the pandal. In some cases, there is a grand procession from the bride's house to meet the bridegroom's party. A male member of the family, either the maternal uncle or the brother of the bride, washes his feet, and brings the girl, who is already gaily dressed and bedecked with ornaments, into the pandal, round which she goes three times. She is then seated on his left side, and the girl's father makes presents of cloths (*manthrakodi*) in which bride and bridegroom dress themselves, and after the usual distribution of gifts to Brahmans and the Elayad, the latter hands over the *táli* made by the village goldsmith, at the lucky moment mentioned



A TALL-TYING GROUP OF NAIR GIRLS.

by the Kaniyán or local astrologer, to the bridegroom who with the sword on his lap ties it round the neck of the girl. She is then required to hold an arrow and a looking glass. When several girls have to undergo the ceremony, a single Thirumulpád performs it or as many Thirumulpads as there are girls. The Thirumulpad gets one to eight rupees for each girl. As soon as the *táli* tying is over, certain formalities indicative of the wife's duties (giving the bridegroom betel to chew, giving him a vessel of water to wash his feet and some fruits to eat, etc.), are gone through, and after this, the *táli* tier is allowed to depart receiving his fee for the service rendered by him. The account given above is that of the ceremony performed in the aristocratic families of the State. Among the Nayars in the northern parts of the State as well as in other places, the Kaniyan or the village astrologer examines the horoscope or horoscopes of the girl or girls and those of the boys of the families of their *enangans*, selects the boy or boys fit to tie the *táli* and determines the auspicious hour, when information is also given to the *káranavan* of the boy's families regarding the proposal and a formal request to them to allow the boys to serve as bridegrooms. In the event of their willingness, preparation for the ceremony begins at once. The rites and the order in which they are performed differ in different places, and in different subdivisions of the same caste, but the general characteristics are the same throughout. In well-to-do families there is a *táli* tier for each girl, while in others, a young man is invited to tie the conjugal collar for one girl, and for others, the mother does it. The beating of drums, firing of pop-guns, the procession with elephant, and the worship of the Sun by the girl on a raised platform are all dispensed with. The other formalities except the *Bráhmāni's* song in some places are the same as those described above. Added to the jollity of the occasion are the vociferous and joyous shouting of the parties of men arranged for the purpose, as also a peculiar sound produced by the women assembled there.

The married couple are taken inside the house, and the ceremony is practically over. The *Karayinnel Asán*, the headman of the village, plays an important part in the ceremony. In a conspicuous part of the pandal he is provided with a seat on a cot, on which are spread, a grass mat, a black blanket and

a white cloth, one over the other. His permission is solicited for the performance of the ceremony, and, with his consent, the *táli* is tied. He is paid four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two or sixty-four *puthans* (one *puthan* is equal to ten pies), according to the means of the family. He also gets some curry stuffs, betel leaves, arecanuts and tobacco. There is also at the time a grand distribution of *pán supári*, scented sandal paste, jasmine flowers to the women of the village and to the wives of the relatives assembled there. Then follows the feast to the guests assembled there, for which certain formalities are observed, with regard to the seats arranged for them; any violation of the social etiquette will result in the guests abruptly leaving the dining hall without partaking of any food. The women of the family and their relatives are first served. The women of the sub-caste as well as those of the village return home after chewing betel. The men of the same sub-castes and others are next served, then others lower in status to them, and lastly come in for their share the village barber and washerman. Provision is sometimes made to feed the members of the very low castes. In the meanwhile, what is known as *Pakarcha* (cooked rice, curries, sweets, etc., for the feasts) is sent to the families of relations. It must be said that the various preparations of the feast are boiled rice, vegetable curries, *páyasam* (rice boiled in milk) and butter milk, and the grandness of the feast is judged by the quantity of rice prepared for consumption, and other preparations are in proportion to it. The first day's ceremony and the feast thus come to an end. The ceremony however lasts for the next three days, but there is nothing of importance on the second and the third days, except some dancing and music by maidens inside the *pandal*. In some places, on the third day, the caste-men of the village are treated to a luncheon of rice and milk pudding and to varieties of amusements, such as the *Kathakali* and other performances.

On the fourth day, the caste-men are again invited. The married couple bathe in the neighbouring tank or river holding each other's hand, and are taken in procession to worship the deity in the village temple amidst the beating of tom-toms and merry shouts, after which the party return home. The bridegroom and the bride are taken to the kitchen, which they are prohibited from entering during the first three days, and there they dine together. After this, they proceed to the *pandal* where

the wedding dress is torn and given to the *Chithayan* which signifies the dissolution of marriage. In some places this takes place on the morning of the fifth day, and instead of this ceremony the *táli* tier is given a fee of eight annas and is dismissed with some presents, and in others the cloth is severed into two parts and each part given to the bridegroom and the bride separately in the presence of *enangans* and other friends. Throughout South Malabar, the severing of the cloth on the fourth day is indispensable and is part of the ceremony, while, in this State, it is said that the custom is not now in vogue. The marriage badge is not removed soon after the divorce, but is worn by the girl till the twenty-eighth day. Some remove it on the fourth or the fifth day, while others wear it for a week.

In poor families, where this ceremony cannot be performed on a large scale, the girls are taken to the nearest temple, and the *táli* is tied by the mother with neither feasting nor merriment. In some cases very poor people take their girls before the deity in the *Trikkákkarappan* temple and tie the *táli*, and very often do such people perform the ceremony on the *Onam* day in front of the clay image (*Mahádévar*) placed in their court-yard.

Where the Thirumulpád is the *táli* tier, he goes through the ceremony for a number of girls, and on receipt of the fee for his service to each girl, he departs in peace. If the *táli* tier, whether a Kshatriya or a young man of the *enangu*, wishes to take her as his wife, he is at liberty to do so with the consent of her parents; and in that case he has to celebrate the *sambandham* by giving her presents of cloth.

In South Malabar and the Cochin State, the general belief among the Nayars is, that the bridegroom has a right to marry her if he wills, and the severing of the cloth shows the dissolution of the marriage tie, which gives her the liberty to choose anybody else as her husband. It is also understood that, with the tying of the *táli*, the virginity ceases, and he who brings or takes her to that stage has a right to cohabit with her, which he relinquishes on the fourth day of the *Tálikettu kalyđnam*. Further, the woman observes a sort of pollution for fifteen days for the death of the man who tied the *táli*, which proves that he is her husband. In some parts she merely bathes, and even this has been of late given up.

The following is given to be the explanation of the ceremonial :—There is very little difference between the *Tálikettu*

kalyānam of the Nayars and the marriage ceremony among other Hindus. All available evidence unmistakably points to the conclusion that the former is, in intention, if not in effect, the actual marriage ceremony of the Hindus. The ceremonials in the two cases differ very little; there is, however, one exception, namely, that in the case of Brahmans and others, vedic *mantrams* are recited, while the Nayars are compelled to substitute Brahmani *pattu* (song), which should be uttered in the *Rig védic swaram*. Ever since the institution of this system of marriage in Kerala, these songs have been in existence, and they invoke the blessings of numerous children for the pair. It must also be noted that, among all Brahmans, the wedding ceremony is divided into two parts, namely, the first in which the ceremonials form the chief feature, known as betrothal, and the second, popularly known as consummation or the real marriage. In the case of Nayars and other *marumakkathayam* Hindus, the *tīli* tying ceremony for a girl, which is performed before the first sign of menstruation, refers to the betrothal, and the *sambandham* to the real marriage. There is this important difference that, while the Brahmans perform the ceremony after the selection of a husband and postpone the union of the couple to a future date, the *marumakkathayam* people perform the ceremony first and select the husband on the second occasion, *i. e.*, when the girl is fit to be united to her husband. Hence the bridegroom in the first ceremony acts the part of a vicarious husband. But when the husband is ready at hand, it is not unusual for the girl to be actually married on the occasion of *tīli* tying. The reason for this departure may have been due to the scarcity of suitable young men in the old troublous times and the consequent difficulty of securing a proper husband for every girl before puberty and the danger of girls being out-casted in default of it. Hence it is that the early legislators have devised this convenient plan to allow every girl to be married in a sense with the necessary religious ceremony, and enable her to remain unmarried for life without being subject to excommunication from caste. This view is supported by the fact, that the Nayars were, till towards the close of the eighteenth century, a fighting race and that there was a great loss of lives in the wars with neighbouring principalities and tribes. As in other matters the letter of the law has been closely followed, without a corresponding adherence to its spirit.

The Brahmanical explanation, though palpably inadequate, is, that marriage is a sort of sacrament of which every maiden must partake in order that she may cleanse her own being from the taint of original sin, accomplish the salvation of her father and her ancestors, and bring forth a son to carry on the domestic worship (*Sacra privata*) of her husband's family. The Brahmans who observed this either imposed this principle on the Nayars, or the Nayars borrowed it from them in the belief that it would lead to social distinction.

Looking on this form of marriage in use, they are not regarded as constituting a religious ceremony or a *samskára* or sacrament in the Hindu or European sense of the word. "There is no officiating priest in attendance, there is no formula to be repeated, there is no *vedic*, *puranic* or religious chant or exhortation, and there is no formal benediction. The essential elements of a Brahmanical marriage, viz., taking the bride by the hand or *Pánigrahanam*, the walking of seven steps or *Saptapáti*, and the *hómam* or sacrifice to the fire, are not to be found among its details. Therefore the marriage customs among *marumakkatháyam* Hindus have no connection with their religious observances such as exists under ordinary Hindu law though several of the details bear a resemblance to a portion of the marriage ritual of the Nambutiris." ¹

The *Thirondukuli* is a celebration when a girl reaches the age of maturity. When a girl comes of age, she is lodged in a separate room where a lamp is lit and a brass pot with a bunch of cocoanut flowers is kept. She has to keep with her a circular plate of brass with a handle, called *válkannúti*, literally a looking glass with a handle. The event is proclaimed by a *Kurava* (shouts of joy by women). The women of the neighbouring families, and those of friends and relations visit her, and some of them make presents of cloths. On the third day, the villagers, friends and relatives are treated to a luncheon of rice and milk pudding. Early in the morning of the fourth day, the Mannáns or Vélans (washermen) appear. The girl is anointed with oil, and the tender leaves of the cocoanut palm are tied round the head and loins. In the company of maidens she leaves the room and the Vélans entertain the party, who soon move on in procession to a neighbouring tank where she wears the cloth washed by a washerman. Then

Puberty customs (Thirondukuli).

she bathes with her friends. The same party return home in procession, when the *Bráhmāni* entertains the party with her music. In the afternoon, the girl is seated in a pandal put up in front of the house, where the Vélans continue the songs, which are *Puranic*, and the assembled guests who are chiefly the women of the village as also those of their friends and relatives present the washerman, each with a piece of cloth. They are entertained at a sumptuous feast held that day; after which the assembled party break up, taking leave of the host. In some places, the girl is taken to a separate house on the fourth day for the bath; whence she returns to her house in procession together with the beating of drum and joyous shouts. In the northern parts of the State, the Vélans' songs are at night, and the performance of the ceremony is compulsory on the fourth day. In the southern Taluks it is often put off to a convenient day, before the completion of which, the girl is prohibited from entering into the kitchen or going to the temple for worship.

The second or real marriage is the *Sambandham* (the customary union of man and woman), which is the principal word denoting the conjugal relations among the Nayars. It is said that there are seven forms of this marriage prevailing in Malabar, of which only two or three are in vogue in the State. The customs connected with each of the latter differ in different places: nevertheless the main features are the same all over. The best form of *Sambandham* among the Nayars is that between the daughter of a maternal uncle and his nephew; but, as a rule they enjoy very much greater freedom of choice than other classes of people. The parents or friends of the bride or bridegroom make the proposal, and the wishes of the *kúranavans* of the two families are invariably consulted after the examination and agreement of their horoscopes. If the parties agree, an auspicious day is fixed in consultation with the astrologer. A few of the caste-men of the village and the friends of the bridegroom meet together in his house, and they all go in a sort of procession to the bride's house where they are properly welcomed and seated in a conspicuous part of the house. A portion of the *Rámáyanam* or other sacred book, referring to marriage and the happy conjugal life attending it, is then read by the *Asán* or village school master. Some music is also provided for the entertainment of the assembled guests who



A NAIR GIRL FOR SAMBANDHAM (MARRIAGE) WITH HER
BRIDESMAIDS.

are treated to a sumptuous dinner, and at the auspicious hour the bridegroom and his party proceed to a conspicuous part of the house, where a seat is specially provided for him. On either side of the seat and a little in front of it, are placed two lighted lamps. There the bridegroom and the bride make obeisance to the *káranavans* and other elderly men present there, distribute presents of money to the Brahmans who pronounce their benediction upon the conjugal pair. The bridegroom or his *káranavans* in the northern parts of the State give her the wedding dress in which she is dressed. The bride is then ushered in, either by her mother or by an elderly member of the family when cloths are given to the bride by the bridegroom. In some places the bridegroom and his party chew betel leaf and nut, while they chat with the women. After a while, the party begins to break up, one by one, wishing the couple all happiness, and the women, departing one by one, leaving the couple alone, one of them closing the door from outside. About daybreak, next morning, the bridegroom departs from the house, leaving under the pillow a sum of money according to his means. The *sambandham* is now complete. The woman resides in her family, and her husband visits her there. A few days after this, the bridegroom's mother or some senior woman of his family sends some cloths including *pávu mundus* (superior cloths) and *thóρθa mundus* (towels) and also some gingelly oil for her use during the next six months. Every six months, she does the same, and on the festivals of *Onam*, *Vishu* and *Thiruváthira* she is given a little money, arecanut, betel, tobacco and banana. Before long the women of the bridegroom's family express their wish to see her, and have her brought to their family by a few women of the former. She stays there for a few days and is sent back to her own house with presents of ornaments and clothes from senior women of the house. After this she is at liberty to visit her husband's house on any day, auspicious or inauspicious.

In the Chittur and Talapilly Taluks of the State as also in the Palghat Taluk of South Malabar, this form of marriage is called *Kidakkóra* or *Kidakka kalyánam* (the bed chamber ceremony). As part of this ceremony, a declaration is made by one of the bridegroom's party to the senior female of the bride's house in the presence of the assembled guests in the following terms:— " Let this youth visit this damsel for

six months," and a reply is given in the terms "Be it so". Thus, the permission of the senior lady of the bride's family is asked and given to the bridegroom to visit the bride for a period of six months.

The young men of some aristocratic families who wish to perform *sambandham* have the brides brought to them on an auspicious day without any formal ceremony, and henceforth look upon them as their wives.

The union is generally effected with the mutual consent, but is terminable at the will of either party. Practically, a marriage thus effected is, in the majority of instances, found as happy and enduring as others more formal and ceremonial.

The following is the account given by the late Mr. Chandu Menon of the ceremonies constituting the marriage among the Nayars of Malabar. It is quoted here, because it is a typical description which covers all forms of the union :—

"*Sambandham* is the principal Malayalam word as *viváham* is in Sanskrit. Whatever may be the *sambandhams* of the *marumakkathúyam* Nayars, there can be no doubt that the idea which the word conveys to a Malayali is the same as the word *viváham*. The generic term, *sambandham*, which, in South Malabar between Calicut and Nedunganad, and in Ponnani, Cochin, and parts of Travancore, is the old name to denote marriage includes—

1. *Guna dósham* as used in South and North Malabar.
2. *Pudamuri* or its Sanskrit synonym for *Vastradánam* used in South Malabar.
3. *Uzhamporukkuka*, and *Vidúram Kairuga* of North Malabar.
4. The *Kidakkóra kalyánam* of Palghat and parts of Nedunganád.

Pudamuri, *Vastradánam*, *Uzhamporukkuka*, *Vidúram Kiaruga* are local expressions hardly understood beyond the localities in which they are used, but there would hardly be a Malayali who would not really understand what is meant by *sambandham thudanguka* (to begin *sambandham*). The meaning of this phrase which means "to marry" is understood throughout the Keralam in the same way, and there cannot be any ambiguity about it.

It is thus found, that *sambandham* is the principal word denoting marriage among the *marumakkathúyam* Nayars. It

will also be found on a close and careful examination of facts, that the principal features of this *sambandham* ceremony all over Keralam, are, in the main, the same. As there are different local names denoting marriage, so there may be found local variations in the performance of the ceremony. But the general features are more or less the same. For instance, the examination, prior to the betrothal, of the horoscopes of the bride and bridegroom to ascertain whether the stars agree astrologically, the appointment of an auspicious day for the celebration of the ceremony, the usual hours at which the ceremony takes place, the presentation of the *dānam* (gifts) to the Brahmans, the sumptuous banquet, the meeting of the bride and bridegroom, are the features which will invariably be found in all well conducted *sambandhams* in all parts of Keralam alike. But here I would beg to state, that I should not be understood as saying that each and every one of the formalities above referred to are gone through at all *sambandhams* among respectable Nayars, and I would further say, that they ought to be gone through at every *sambandham*, if the parties wish to marry according to the custom of the country. I would now briefly refer to the local variations to be found in the ceremony of *sambandham*, with the particular incident attached to certain forms of *sambandham* in South Malabar. I shall describe the *Pudamuri* or *Vastradānam* as celebrated in North Malabar, and show how the other forms of *sambandham* are related to it. I consider the *Pudamuri* form the most solemn and the most fashionable in North Malabar. The preliminary ceremony in every *Pudamuri* is the examination of the horoscopes of the bride and bridegroom by an astrologer. This takes place in the house of the bride in the presence of the relations of the bride and the bridegroom. The astrologer, after examination, writes down the results of his calculation on a piece of palmyra leaf with his opinion as to the fitness or otherwise of the match, and hands it over to the bridegroom's relations. If the horoscopes agree, a day is then and there fixed for the celebration of the marriage. This date is also written down on two pieces of cadjan, one of which is handed over to the bride's *kūranavan* and the other to the bridegroom's relations. The astrologer and the bridegroom's party are then feasted in the bride's house, and the former also receives presents in the shape of money or cloth, and this preliminary ceremony is invariably performed

at all *Pudamuris* in North Malabar. It is called *Pudamuri Kodukkal* (giving pieces of cloth for dressing), and it is unknown in South Malabar.

Some three or four days prior to the date fixed for the celebration of the *Pudamuri*, the bridegroom visits his *káranavans* and elders in caste to obtain formal leave to marry. The bridegroom on such occasion presents his elders with betel and nut, and obtains their formal sanction to the wedding. On the day appointed, the bridegroom proceeds after sunset, to the house of the bride, accompanied by a number of his friends. He goes in procession, and is received at the gate of the house of the bride's party, and is conducted with his friends, to seats provided in the *tekkini* or southern hall of the house. There the bridegroom distributes presents (*dánams*) or money gifts to the Brahmans assembled. After this, the whole party is treated to a sumptuous banquet. It is now the time for the astrologer to appear and announce the auspicious hour fixed. He does it accordingly and receives his dues. The bridegroom is then taken by one of his friends to the *patinjattu* or principal room of the house. The bridegroom's party has, of course, brought with them a quantity of new cloths and betel leaves and nuts. The cloths are placed in the western room of the house in which all religious and other important household ceremonies are usually performed. This room will be decorated and turned into a bed room for the occasion. There will be placed in the room a number of lighted lamps and *ashtamangalyam* which consists of eight articles symbolical of *mangalyam* or marriage. These are rice, paddy, the tender leaves of cocoanut trees, an arrow, a looking-glass, a well-washed cloth, lighted fire and a small round wooden box called a *cheppu* made in a peculiar fashion. They will be found placed on the floor of the room aforesaid as the bridegroom enters it. The bridegroom with his best man enters the room through the western door accompanied by the bride's aunt or some other elderly lady of her family. The bride stands facing east with the *ashtamangalyam* and lits up lamps, and the head and shoulders of the bride and bridegroom are touched, and the bridegroom immediately leaves the room, as he has to perform another duty. At the *tekkini* or southern hall, he now presents his elders and friends with cakes and betel leaves and

nuts, which are also given to all the persons assembled at the place. After the departure of the guests, the bridegroom retires to the bed room with the bride.

This is an unvarnished account of a *Pudamuri*. Next morning *veetil kettu* or *salkaram* ceremony follows, and the relations of the bridegroom take the bride to the husband's house, where the bride's party are treated to a grand feast".¹

The *sambandham* or *Pudamuri* ceremony is not a marriage in the legal or sacramental sense of the term. The views of the members of the orthodox community in Malabar, who are the expounders of the existing customs, are of great ethnographic importance. It is said that the Nambuthiris consort with Nayar females by *sambandham*, and precisely the same ceremony is gone through whether the husband is a Nambuthiri or a Nayar. The Nambuthiris do not look upon it as a marriage. Where a Brahman is a bridegroom, he cannot eat with his Sudra wife, and is therefore unable to join with his wife in the wedding feast. There is no comparison of horoscopes. The aristocracy of the District of Malabar, the Rajas who are admittedly the heads of the Nayar caste, and the Nambuthiris who are the expounders of religion, opine, that chastity is not one of the duties prescribed for the Nayar community and *slokas* (verses) are quoted to prove this. This view is not held in the Cochin State.

In the Malabar Marriage Commission, one hundred and ninety-seven witnesses admitted the undoubted fact that either party to the union may terminate it at any time from wantonness, caprice or any other reason, and that if the couple joined together by *Pudamuri* were satisfied with one night of hymeneal bliss, there is no legal impediment to prevent their separating without any formality on the following morning. Ninety-one witnesses alleged some formality to be necessary, and that parties should not separate without the approval of their *karanavans* or of their relatives or of their caste people. There was also a small minority (twenty-one witnesses) who denied to the women the right of divorce which they accorded to man, assigning as their reason, that, under the Hindu Law, no woman can be independent. This minority would deprive

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 35-37.

marumakkathayam of its one great merit, viz., that in sexual matters it places the man and the woman on terms of equality giving equal freedom to both. With practical unanimity, the witnesses admitted that the man may turn away the woman, and that under the *marumakkathayam* law, he is in no way responsible for the maintenance of the children whom he has begotten upon her. Further, the person that begot a child in a *marumakkathayam* female was originally regarded as a casual visitor and the sexual relation depended for his continuance on mutual consent.¹

The views expressed above are those of the landed aristocracy, and the rulers who were admittedly of the Nayar caste, as also those of the somewhat selfish class of the Nambuthiris, of Malabar, who, to gratify their selfish ends, quote chapter and verse of their own creation in support of the existing custom and teachings, which the Nayars of these days will never submit to. All or nearly all of them cling to one wife for life, and with them *sambandham* is the real marriage, *de facto* and *de jure*. This is the real state of affairs in the States of Cochin and Travancore as well as in British Malabar. The present and growing tendency in all cases, in which, a man, whether a Nambuthiri or a Nayar, consorts with a Nayar woman, is to look upon her as the true wife, and the children of such unions are looked upon as theirs and duly provided for, so far as their means permit. The statement is to a certain extent confirmed by Mr. Logan, who was the Collector of Malabar for many years and thus had ample opportunities of knowing a great deal of Malabar and its people. He says, "this part of Malabar has, in the hands of unenquiring commentators, brought much undeserved obloquy on the morality of the people. The fact, at any rate, of recent years, is that, although the theory of the law sanctions freedom in these relations, conjugal fidelity is very general. Nowhere is the marriage tie, albeit, informal, more rigidly observed or respected; nowhere is it more jealously guarded or its neglect more savagely avenged. Their very looseness of the law makes the individual observances closer, for people have been watchful over the things they are most liable to lose. The absence of a ceremonial has encouraged the popular impression, but a ceremonial,

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 38 to 44.

like other conventionalities, is an accident, and the Nayar women are as chaste and faithful as their neighbours, just as they are as modest as their neighbours, although their national costume does not include some of the details required by conventional notions of modesty.”¹ Nevertheless, the existing state of things in the community does not quite satisfy the sentiments of the educated public. There was a loud cry for reform and legislation in British Malabar. The Madras Government appointed a commission, which, after its protracted labours, enacted a permissive law, Act IV of 1896. The main provisions of the Bill are, that, when a *sambandham* has been registered, it shall have the incidence of a legal marriage; that is to say, the wife and children shall be entitled to maintenance by the husband or father respectively and to succeed to half his self-acquired property if he dies intestate, while the parties to such a *sambandham* cannot register a second one during its continuance. The law does not extend to this State. The fewness of the number of marriage registrations shows how little the Nayers, as a community, have availed themselves of it. The principal objections urged against it are: (1) that it ignores caste and customary restrictions on marriage and thereby interferes with caste; (2) that it sanctions what according to social usage is deemed to be incestuous marriage; (3) that marriage before the Registrar is obnoxious to the people, and that no one has any scruples about going through the customary form; (4) that the provisions relating to divorce are ill-adapted to the present state of society in Malabar, and that revelations of conjugal infidelity in public courts are the most repulsive to the people; (5) that the provisions relating to the giving of the whole of the self-acquired property to wives and children amount to violent interference with the customary law. The following extract from Moore’s Malabar Law and Customs is well worth the perusal²:—

From the date on which the Act in Malabar came into force up to 31st March 1910, one hundred *sambandhams* have been registered. “In his last report of the working of the Act, the Registrar-General states, that the number of notices of

1. Logan’s Manual of Malabar, Vol. I, page 136.

2. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 25.

intentions to register *sambandhams* was thirty-six in 1896—97, twenty-four in 1897—98 and only fourteen in 1898—99. " He accounts for the falling off as follows :—

The mass of the people continues to regard the marriage law with aversion and suspicion, and even the educated members of the community who are in favour of the measure, shrink from taking advantage of it from fear of offending the elderly members of their *tarawdds*, and all the powerful Nambuthiris and other great landlords. The Registrar of Calicut also points out, that the power conferred by the marriage law, to make provision for one's own wife and children, has hitherto acted as some inducement to persons to register their *sambandhams*, but as Act V of 1898 (Madras) which came into force from 2nd September 1898, enables the followers of the *marumakkathayam* law to attain this object without registering their *sambandhams*, and "unnecessarily curtailing their liberty of action, and risking the chances of divorce proceedings," he thinks it unlikely that registration under the marriage law would increase in future.

Among the Nayars of ancient times in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore, there was polyandry. In the report of the Malabar Marriage Commission, it is said, that there is evidence to show that it still lingers in Ponnani and Walluvanad Taluks, especially on the Cochin border of the former Taluk.¹ Apart from its existence in former times, it may be said that nowhere in these States is the custom still found to linger, no admitted instance of it has come to my notice in the course of my investigations into the customs and manners of the castes in the various parts of the State. An account of these customs as it existed in ancient times, and the theories that have been advanced in respect of it are of some ethnographical importance, and it may not be out of place here.

The Nayars of ancient times were, in most cases, neither regularly married, nor did they care much, when married, to support their wives and children ; but their nephews (sons of sisters), who were their legitimate heirs, were properly looked after. Nayar women generally mated with Brahmans or Nayars, but never with people of lower caste under pain of

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 83.

death. At ten or twelve years of age of a girl, her mother begged some one of their relations to marry her, and they did so by tying a marriage badge (*tali*). Then the bridegroom would leave her and go away without any consideration of his new relationship. She might also remain with him if he wished it. If she was not inclined to do so, the mother would then go about seeking some one to take her daughter to live with him. If the girl happened to be pretty, three or four Nayars would agree to live with her, and the more lovers she had, the more highly was she esteemed. Each man had his appointed time from midday to the next day at the same hour, during which some signal was placed at the door so that the others might not enter. She was at liberty to dismiss whomsoever she disliked. The advantage of this system was, that a man, who had not the means to support a wife, might have only a share of the cost of the maintenance. Nevertheless, there was a difficulty in ascertaining the fathers of children, who generally lived with the mothers by whom they were brought up. The fathers, in such cases, were named by the mothers. It is said that the kings made this law in order that the Nayars might not abandon their service. According to this system, the fathers were not succeeded by their sons but by nephews (sons of sisters). The above is a summarised account from 'The Travels on the East coast of Africa and Malabar' by Duarte Barbosa, from those of Lodovico Varthema, as also from the voyage of Frankoy Pyard, page 371.

The orthodox view or rather the traditional account according to the *Keralamahatmyam*,¹ is that certain celestial damsels were brought from the world of Indra by Parasurama to satisfy the sexual cravings of the Kerala Brahmans; and that at Vrishabhadri (Trichur), he pronounced his commandment to the *Sámanthan* and *Sudra* castes to gratify the desires of the said Brahmans, ordering them to put off chastity and the cloth which covered their breasts, and declaring that promiscuous intercourse with three or four men in common was devoid of the least taint of sin. This is certainly a very convenient arrangement for the junior members of the Nambuthiri families to be relieved of their life-long bachelorhood (*Bramhacharyam*) without any

Origin of the custom
of polyandry.

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 19.

responsibility to support their wives and children from their family property. Whether it was introduced by the Nambuthiris, it is difficult to believe; and it is to be noted, that it was prevailing to a considerable extent in North Malabar, among whom and other low castes their influence was less than in South Malabar and the Cochin State.

The *Smṛiti*¹ says, "the Sudras' appointed path to Heaven is serving the Brahmins". "The practice of Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, having sexual intercourse with the servile women is in accordance with the *sāstrás*. If a Brahman wish to have sexual intercourse with a Sudra wife, the Sudra is bound to gratify the wish. A Sudra cannot be sure of the true parentage of his children". Again, before the Malabar Marriage Commission, the Zamorin Maharaja Bahadur, Ettan Thampuran Avergal, a learned Sanskrit scholar, Kolattúr Váriar and other respectable witnesses unanimously deposed, that, in Kerala, a non-Brahman or *marumakkatháyam* woman need not be chaste, and she is not forbidden to consort with more than one man. To such teachings of the learned and influential leaders of the orthodox community, the Nayers of these days will no longer submit.

Another important theory connects the practice with the military organisation of the Nayar community. Montaigne was evidently of opinion, that it was introduced, because the Nayar leaders looked upon an army of bachelors as the most effective instrument in war.² The subjection of the males of a whole race from the earliest youth to the decline of manhood must therefore have been the cause of the fugitive connection and promiscuous intercourse.

European writers, such as Baron Auebury, Meyr, Mc. Linan, and others, have arrived at the conclusion, that the system of inheritance now prevalent among the Nayers must have originated from a type of polyandry resembling free love. In ancient times, the rule was that the wife should remain in her own house and be visited by her husband, and that the eldest female was at the head of the house, which was afterwards transferred to the eldest male. The part of man in the function of generation passed as of secondary importance or as

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 17.

2. Essays of Michael Montaigne.

impossible to determine. It was under the influence of the tangible fact of maternity, that the notions of race, family and inheritance were elaborated and developed. Against this is the fact, that the jungle tribes and very low castes have a regular system of marriage and a kind of paternal inheritance.

Sir Henry Mayne maintains that the origin of society in patriarchal lines, is that polyandry and kinship through females are of temporary duration, liable to be brought about at any stage in the progress of society by peculiar circumstances under which it may be placed. If this were true, the popular belief that Nambuthiris brought it about to accommodate their domestic habits is easily proved.

Letourneau says that there is no warrant to consider this form of conjugal union as having been general, but that it is in exceptional form brought about by necessity in a good number of gross societies. This view to some extent is shared by Herbert Spencer who says that polyandry is one form of marital relations or arrangements independently originating in the earliest societies by successive limitations of promiscuity. Lastly, the opinion is unanimous that the Nayers and other *marumakkathayis* are Dravidians and that polyandry and its accompanying incidents prevailed in Southern India among the non-Aryan tribes. There is strong reason to think, that the *tali* tying ceremony, the prohibition of sexual union outside the caste, and the doctrine of *Anulomam* and *Pathilomam* were originally introduced by Nambuthiri Brahmans as restrictions on promiscuities. Thus, so different are the views of anthropologists on this subject, that it still remains an unsettled problem in the ethnology of Kerala. As has been already said, the custom of polyandry is dead. The women of the upper and middle classes are monogamous, and marriage in practice amply satisfies the definition of Lord Penzance in *Hyde v. Hyde*, namely, "the voluntary union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all other".

There is nothing which prevents a man from entering into
 Polygamy. conjugal relations with more than one woman
 at a time ; nevertheless, it is seldom practised.

Indeed, when a man feels happy and contented with his own wife, very seldom has he any inclination to form *sambandham* with another for the sake of novelty unless forced by the

circumstances of his matrimonial life. If however he do so, his family and society will not recognise it as such, and no woman of any respectability will enter into such an alliance.

According to the customary rules of *sambandham*, the relationship between husband and wife, ceases at the will and pleasure of either party; but in practice, such dissolution of marriage is of rare occurrence. The woman generally does not leave her husband, while the man may send her away whenever he chooses to do so. Marriage can be dissolved only with the consent of the *kíranavans* or the other elders of the family. There are certain formalities to be observed in this connection, which vary in detail in different places, but some secret act indicating the intention of repudiation seems necessary before the divorce. In the event of the husband trying to effect a separation from his wife, he sends two or three respectable men to give intimation to the *kíranavan* of the wife's family setting forth his reason for so doing. If the wife wishes to terminate the *sambandham*, she brings it to the notice of the *kíranavan*, and with his consent tells the husband in the presence of her relatives the reasons for discarding him. In the northern parts of the State, especially in the Chittur Taluk, the prevailing custom is to send for the husband and two of the fellow caste-men and to declare the reluctance of the woman to continue as wife, in the presence of these men. In some cases, instead of the formal declaration of the dissolution of marriage, certain conduct on the part of the parties is tantamount to such a declaration, such, for instance, as the failure by the husband or his family to send the usual presents to the family of the wife for *Onam*, *Vishu* and *Thiruváthira*, the refusal of the wife's people to accept them when sent, the failure to pay for wife's sustenance attended with deliberate omission to visit her, the deliberate absence for three consecutive nights, with the consent of the elders from her husband's room. As a rule, no dissolution is allowed unless the cases for the same are enquired into and discussed by guardians and relations. Though a woman is free to marry and to dissolve the union, yet, as a rule, she never does so. The fear of social disgrace and self interest stand in the way of a woman's attempt to separate from her husband. In Cochin as well as in South Malabar, the women

Duration of conjugal union.

are allowed greater freedom in the choice as well as in the divorce of husbands (*sambandhakárans*), and the females in the family do not interfere in their freedom so long as it does not produce any domestic scandal. The orthodox view is that, as the woman is not independent, she seldom thinks of relinquishing the husband. Arbitrary divorce is thus discouraged, and adultery is a grave social offence. A wife, who is disputatious, who steals her husband's property, who favours another than her husband, who converses with strangers, who is gluttonous, who enters strange houses, should be put away even though she may have born ten sons. Litigation between two families and disagreement between a husband and wife are also the causes. Social stigma follows the adulterer, and the adulteress loses her status in society.

A Nayar woman has to observe certain ceremonies during her first pregnancy. First during and after the seventh month of pregnancy, she bathes and worships the deity in the temple every morning, and eats before her morning meal, a small quantity of butter, over which holy *mantrams* have been recited by the temple priest or by Nambuthiris. This is done generally till delivery. *Pulikudi* (tamarind juice drinking) is an indispensable ceremony performed for every pregnant woman, by the rich and poor alike, on an auspicious day, in the ninth month of pregnancy. An auspicious day, nay, even the very hour, is fixed by the astrologer. The ceremony opens by the planting of a twig of the *ambázha* tree (*Spondias mangifera*) on the morning of the day of the ceremony in the inner court-yard (*nadumittam*) or the northern wing of the house. At the appointed hour (*muhúrtam*), the pregnant woman, after having been bathed and properly attired, is conducted to the northern block of the house (*vāṭikkini*) where she is seated facing eastwards. The *Ammáyi* or the uncle's wife, whose presence on the occasion is essential, goes to the court-yard, and plucking a few leaves of the planted twig, squeezes a few drops of its juice into a cup. This she hands over to the brother, or uncle, if any, of the pregnant woman. It is necessary that the brother should wear a gold ring on his right hand ring-finger. Holding a country knife (*pisánkatti*) in his left hand, with its point towards the north, he pours the tamarind juice over his knife with his right hand three times

The juice dribbles down the knife into her mouth, and she drinks it. In the absence of a brother, some other near relation officiates. After she has swallowed the tamarind juice, she is asked to pick one grain out of several packets of different grains placed before her. The grain in the packet is supposed to declare the sex of the child in her womb. The whole ceremony is wound up by a sumptuous feast to all the relatives and friends of the family. The *enangan's* wife at the time pours oil over the head of the pregnant woman. If the oil flows on the left side, it predicts the birth of a female; if on the right side, a male.

When a Nayar woman is about to become a mother, she is placed in a reclining position on a low
 Childbirth.

wooden couch (*kattódom*), her back supported by a companion, generally an old woman. The *kattódom* is very like, if not identical with, the couch on which the Nayar woman has her oil bath. The surface of it is sloping, the higher end being where the head is laid, and it is scooped out so as to suit the curvatures of the body lying flat. Lying on her back, the thighs are stretched wide apart. Very often she holds in each hand a rope suspended from the ceiling by way of support. The child is received by a woman of the barber caste, who generally officiates as midwife, and in some places this duty is performed by a woman of the Vélán caste. Pollution is observed for fifteen days, and on every day, the mother wears cloths, washed and presented her by *Vannúthi* (a woman of the washerman caste). On the fifteenth day is the purificatory ceremony. As in the case of death pollution, a man of the Athikurussi clan sprinkles on the woman a liquid mixture of oil, and the five products of the cow (*panchagavyam*) with gingelly seeds. Then the woman dips herself in a tank or river or sits on the ground near the bank, and a maid servant pours on her head the water from a vessel as many as twenty-one times. This practice is not universal, though it certainly obtains in the State and in some parts of South Malabar and Travancore.

It may be noticed that, before the mother proceeds to purify herself, the new born baby has also to undergo some rite of purification. The baby is placed on the bare floor, and its father or uncle sprinkles a few drops of cold water on it

and takes it in his hands. The belief is that the temperament of the child is determined by that of the person who thus sprinkles the water. All the members of the *tarawád* observe pollution for fifteen days immediately after the delivery, during which period they are prohibited from entering temples and holy places.

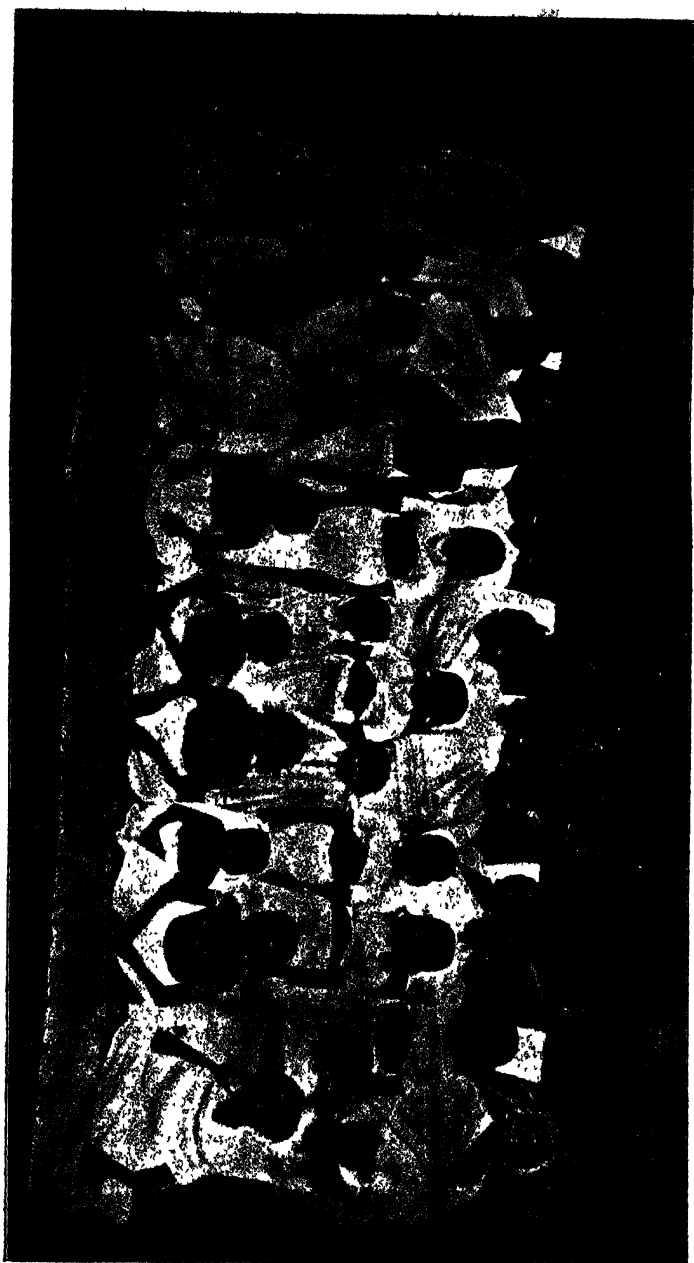
The twenty-seventh day after the childbirth or the first recurring day of the star under which it was born, is an important day, on which the *káranavan* of the family gives to the child a spoonful or two of milk mixed with sugar and slices of plantain fruits reduced to a kind of pulp. Then he names the child calling it in the ear by name, three times. In some places the naming ceremony takes place in the sixth month on the *Chórúnu* day, i. e., on the day of feeding. This is followed by a feast to all friends and relations, the expenses of which are met by the *káranavan* of the *tarawád*. The child is not fed on rice for some time after birth, the practice being to give it the flour of dried plantain boiled with jaggery. There is a particular variety of plantain known as *kunnan* used for this purpose. Well-to-do parents in these days give Mellin's food. The staple food, which is rice, is given to the child for the first time, generally during the sixth month, and is, of course, attended with some ceremony. Necessarily, the astrologer fixes the day, and at the auspicious hour, the child is bathed and adorned (which is the duty of the father), is brought and laid on a plank. A plantain leaf is spread in front of it, and a bright brass lamp is placed near. On the leaf are served a small quantity of cooked rice, generally a portion of the rice offered to some temple divinity, some tamarind, salt, chillies and sugar. Then the *káranavan* or the father ceremoniously sits down facing the child. First he puts into the mouth of the child, a mixture of tamarind, chillies and salt, then some rice, and lastly a little sugar. Thenceforward, the ordinary food of the child is rice. The ceremony is, in some cases, preferably performed in some famous temple, that at Guruvayur being a favourite one for this purpose. A few annas is given to the priest, who gives a small quantity of the food offered to the deity, with which the child is fed.

First birth-day celebration.

The names of Nayars present great varieties and those most commonly met with are the following :—

(a) Andi Menon Kandār Menon Kannan Menon Ittirayarachan Korappan Koman Menon Kumara Menon Thenchu Menon Konthu Nayar Eacharan Nayar	(c) Velayudhan Names of females : Kunjikavu Chirutha Ichon Kotha Nangeli Ooli Cheeru Cheeronna Ichi Ittiri Mukami Oonni Maya	Narayani Dakshayani Karthayani Meenakshi Gowri Bhargavi Janaki Parvathi Sreedevi
(b) Raman Krishnan Govindan Gopalan Achyuthan Sankaran Narayanan Madhavan Sreedharan Raghavan Neelacandhan	(d) Kalyani Lakshmi Madhavi Rugmani Seetha Subhadra	(e) Pet names of males: Appu Appukuttan Kuttan Balan (f) Pet names of females: Nani (Narayani) Mathu (Madhavi) Kunju (Kunjukutti) Eacheri (Easwari) Parukutti.

The names of males given under (a) are those which appear to be caste names, probably given by the Nambuthiris, who are generally fond of these contracted and disguised appellations. The Nambuthiris say, that the Sudras were so ordained by Manu as not to be called by fair names. They were the landlords and priests, and the Nayars had to do servile work for them. They thought that they ought to keep the Sudras in complete ignorance, and could not endure to hear them talking distinctly in their presence. On one occasion, it is said that when a Sudra servant uttered the words "*Sūrya Rasmi* (sun's rays)," his master was so displeased, that he closed his ears, for he could not bear to hear a servile fellow using so elegant a phrase from Sanskrit. On another occasion, when a Brahman overheard a Sudra uttering the words *ahimsa paramo dharma* (the highest of all duties is not to injure anybody), he said to himself, "what a pity it is, that a Sudra should be able to quote a vedic expression!". Their influence in these and other matters began gradually to diminish after the time of the great Malayalam poet, Thunjathu Rāmanujan. The names of the caste-men given under (b) are chiefly the various designations of Krishna, Rama and Siva, all of whom are worshipped with equal reverence. Some think that the Nayars are chiefly the worshippers of Vishnu, but the fact that, when at Benares, Rameswaram and other places, they perform the ceremonies of offering of rice-balls in honour of their deceased ancestors, calling their ancestors



A TYPICAL N'VAR FAMILY

Sivagothrakúr (worshippers or followers of Siva), would seem to indicate that they reverence Siva more than Vishnu.

"No people" says Elie Reclus, "have more fully appreciated the maternal family, nor developed it more logically than the Nayers, despite the accumulated obstacles thrown in its way by a race admirably intelligent and moreover victorious."¹ The *tarawád* or *marumakkathayam* family consists in theory of all persons who can trace their descent in the female line from a single ancestress. In its simplest form it is one which consists of mother and her children, living together with their maternal uncle, that is the mother's brother, as *káranavan* or the senior male member of the family. In its complex form it consists of a mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grand children by her daughters, all her brothers and sisters and the descendants on the sisters' side,—in short, all the relatives of the woman on the female side, however distant their relationship, living together in the same block of buildings, dining together in the same hall and enjoying all the property in common. No descendant through the male line can be a member of such a family. There are at present instances of families containing a hundred or more members who live in one or more buildings situated in a large compound and who are the descendants of one woman separated perhaps by generations of descent, and yet able to trace their common descent from one ancestress.

In such a family the woman senior to others in age was originally mistress or head of the family, and she reigned or governed. Her eldest daughter was prime minister in the family, and through her all orders were transmitted to her little world. The son recognised the priority of the mother before whom he did not even venture to seat himself, unless she had given him permission. The brother obeyed the elder sister, and respected the younger ones. In fact, the affection between brother and sister was a feeling that endured, while conjugal love was but a passing sentiment. The wives of brothers and sons held but a secondary position in the family. The Nayers loved their families more than anything else in the world, and made it the end of their existence. Like all Hindus they held reprehensible the man who

1. Primitive folk, page 139.

deliberately refused to be a father and deprived himself of the sweet cares involved by the rearing of the children, they were indignant with a girl who refused to be a mother, and those who had not reproduced their species were considered to be subject to terrible punishments in the next world. The old order of things has given place to the new. Many of the old time-honoured customs have already disappeared or begun to disappear. The senior woman is no longer the head of the family, and she has given place to the eldest male member who is known as *kāranavan*. In a joint family which contains a large or fairly a large number of females and males, the former with their children occupy the main building or buildings and the latter live apart in another edifice close to and separated from them. Each of the married women has a room or two; and here her husband visits her. The old women and others occupy the common portion of the house. The boys under age live with their mother under whose care they always are, and the father as a casual visitor does not generally concern himself with the rearing of children. These, after coming of age, join the the adult members, and if they can afford it, live in houses of their own with their wives and children. Where the domestic environments are favourable and the influence of the *kāranavan* (as the father in a patriarchal family) and other senior member prevails, the junior members 'seldom go wrong'. In some cases where such influences do not exist, their conduct is not always satisfactory. The habits of the members are generally regular, and the usual time of rising throughout the year is early dawn. After rising, the males either go to their daily routine, or wait for their morning light meal which they partake after bathing and after worshipping the deity in the local temple. The women attend to their children, look to the domestic minor work, bathe and prepare the breakfast. Great attention is paid to their personal cleanliness. As water is near at hand, men, women, and children take a great pleasure in bathing, which, besides being conducive to cleanliness, is also considered purificatory and curative. Their substantial dinner is, as a rule, a little before midday, and the rest of the day is occupied by the women and others either in the perusal of religious books or in the playing of some indoor game, while visits in the afternoon

are also indulged in. In these days of modern civilization, when schools for boys and girls have increased in the State, many take advantage of the instruction imparted in them, so that when the latter become adults, they profitably spend their leisure hours in reading religious and other books. Towards the evening they go to the temple for worshipping and go round it several times, which, though hygienic in its origin, is considered of religious importance. They return home, and their supper is generally before eight o'clock; after this they retire to their rooms, each married woman occupying her separate room or set of rooms. They lie on mats or beds spread on the floor or on the latter placed on cots with which the rooms are neatly furnished. Such in brief is the family life and organisation of well-to-do families of the Nayars. In poor families in which the members subsist by hard work, the daily routine of life considerably differs from those described above.

Mention has already been made of the *kāranavan*, who is the manager of all affairs in the Nayar family. He is legally responsible for the proper management of the joint property, for the education of the junior members and for everything conducive to the general welfare and happiness of every member of the family. It must be remembered that the family property is joint property and that no member can claim that any portion of it belongs to him or to her, nor can any individual member claim a separate possession or enjoyment of any portion. The ground-work of the system is, that the family property is held in trust for the support of the females and their descendants in the female line. The property is impartible and the family is indissoluble except with the consent of all its members. When, in course of time, the family becomes too unwieldy to be governed and managed by one man, the circumstances and natural forces bring about a division of the family into various distinct sections or families. These separate families keep up the original traditions of their common descent, but have no legal right to the property of one another. The members of the family and their descendants in the female line, thus separated by partition from the main stock, form a *tāvazhi* (*ta*=mother, *vazhi*=line, *i. e.*, mother's line). They live in a separate building and own that portion of the joint property which is theirs in the partition, and which is managed

by the woman's brother or some other senior member as *kāranavan*.

There are some who love and admire the system, and they depict the *tarawād* as a group of males and females bound together by the sacred tie of common descent from one ancestors' grand-mother. "The females have only to follow the natural instinct to be fruitful and to multiply, while the males, free from all care for their own progeny, are expected to labour like the honey bee for the common good of the *tarawād*-hive, and pour their earnings into the lap of the venerable *kāranavan*, who, in the exercise of absolute discretion, administers the income for the benefit of all. Protected by the impartibility of the estate, refreshed by the acquisitions of the junior members, and under the beneficent sway of the senior male, the *tarawād* would rise high and endure through generations."¹ The advantages of such a complete joint family system are three-fold: firstly, the genial society it affords, the closest association of young and old, and the abundant opportunity for recreation and instruction; secondly, in the process of production many of the advantages of concerted labour are secured, as is obvious, without carelessness, dishonesty or misdirected production and consumption; and thirdly, there is the remarkable saving in the process of consumption. The freedom and independence of Nayar women, their influence in the family and the absence of conventional restrictions, such as child marriage, enforced widowhood and the other customs which exercise so baneful an influence upon Hindu society elsewhere are other advantages that add to the excellence of the Nayar system of life.

The system above described, may have worked smoothly enough in former days; but in these days of civilization, with the growing wants of the members, coupled with the indifference and selfishness of the *kāranavan* and the other members, the joint family tends to disintegration. At a certain point the mere increase of the members renders it intolerable for them all to live together under one roof, and when that stage is reached, the *tarawād* splits up into *tāvazhis*, each containing a mother, her brothers and her children.

It is to the woman that the fortune of the family belongs, and yet she is not the mistress of the house but only one

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 44.

of many joint members dependent on the *kāranavan*. The females and the junior members pass their lives in utter discontent and misery, if the *kāranavan* happens to be unsympathetic and tyrannical. The father is not the legal guardian of his children, for whose training and education the *kāraṇavan* is responsible. In families, where there are many boys and girls, the chances are that he educates none of them, on the plea that he cannot afford to educate them all, nor can he make any invidious distinction. The family, in certain cases, becomes the seat of envy, hatred and dissensions, and not a day passes without some dispute or other among the members. It is said that with the advancement of civilization the system becomes more and more unworkable ; it offends against every principle of economy, healthy life and natural affection. By freeing a man from the obligation of maintaining his wife and children, it sanctions the reckless propagation of species, destroys the motive power for prudence and foresight, forces up the population to the very point where it must be kept down by actual want of means of subsistence. It "huddles together" as a family a number of distant relatives not necessarily drawn to each other by any bond of natural affection. It makes home life impossible, for the father is a casual visitor, and mother and children are but units in a heterogeneous flock, dependent on a practically irresponsible guardian, who from a mere accident of his being the eldest of the flock is expected to be able to regard every member with an impartial eye, and at the same time preserve the interests of his wife and children.¹ These causes are at work and tend to divide the families into several branches in the direction of *tāvazhis* by partition. Fortunately, in the Cochin State, such evils as those above described are of rare occurrence, for partition is effected as early as the symptoms of disunion and ill-feeling among the members are visible.

1. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, page 48.

CHAPTER III.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS).

(Continued).

The Nayers follow the *marumakkathayam* law of succession, *i. e.*, the law which regulates succession through the female line. The senior male member called the *káranavan* is entitled to the full possession of the property, and is absolute in its management. The junior members, on the other hand, have a claim to residence and maintenance in the family house. They cannot call for an account except as an incident to a prayer for the removal of the manager for gross misconduct, nor claim any specific share of the income, nor even require that the maintenance provided for them should be in proportion to the income of the *tarawádd*. An absolute discretion in this direction is vested in the manager who is the legal guardian of every member of the family.¹ He is not accountable to any member in the *tarawádd* in respect of its income, nor can a suit be maintained for an account of the *tarawádd* property in the absence of fraud on his part. He is under no obligation to support any member of his *tarawádd* by his own labour or from his self-acquisitions. The only restraint on him in the management is, that he cannot alienate the lands of the family except with the consent of all the other members and without proper necessity.² If a family has so far increased in the number of its members that they cannot conveniently live under the same roof any longer, it divides itself with the consent of the senior member into *távazhis* to each of which is assigned a portion of the property for maintenance, and such *távazhis* may reside in separate houses or farm-houses belonging to the family and appropriating from the lands newly assigned to them an income sufficient to maintain themselves. In the partition of

1. Vide Mayne's Hindu Law, sec. 266.

2. I. L. R. II, Mad., 328.

a Nayar *tarawád*, all the members are equally entitled to a share. The self-acquisitions of each member of a *tarawád* are at his absolute disposal during his life-time, but this right lapses to the *tarawád* on his death.¹ In families where the *káranavans* look after the welfare of each individual member and the savings of the junior members go to increase the wealth of the family, there is peace and prosperity. Such families are rarely found in these days. Times are changed, as also the conditions of the community, and the old and large families are disappearing through mismanagement. In the majority of cases, when the senior member takes up the management, he is too old and unfit to govern a score of men and women younger than himself and bound to him by no natural tie of affection. He often becomes a mere puppet in the hands of an unscrupulous but stronger member while the other members of the *tarawád* suffer from the injustice consequent under such circumstances. In some cases he misappropriates the family property and alienates it in favour of his wife and children, and the gross acts of spoliation carried on by *káranavan* have reduced some of the respectable families in Malabar and elsewhere to poverty and misery. It is also said, that the junior members are disobedient and do not work for the common good and this state of things is also common everywhere. Another cause for the downfall of the ancient family system is the growing disinclination among its junior members to work for the common good of the *tarawád* and their dislike to the rule of the *káranavan*.²

The Nayers who follow this *marumakkathóyam* law of inheritance include nearly all the aristocracy of the country, but the notion that every *tarawád* has an estate sufficient to feed an indefinite number of souls is unfounded and erroneous. Most of the families are poor, and the *káranavans* are mere tenant farmers cultivating a few acres of land on a precarious tenure, and a law which requires such a man, from the produce of his farm, to feed and provide for all the descendants of his female relatives from the time of their birth to their death, whether they work or not, is one of those laws which continue to exist in name but are actually disregarded in practice.³

In ancient times the rulers of Cochin held supreme sway in the territories which belonged to them. There were no regular councils, nor assemblies;

Tribal organiza-
tions.

1. II, Mad. H. C. R. 162.

2 and 3. Malabar Marriage Commission Report, pages 49-51.

and the Rajas were mostly guided by their own will and pleasure unless it ran counter to the customs of the country. Many of them had learned Brahmans to instruct them in the fundamental and long established laws of the country.

Certain checks upon their arbitrary power existed in the form of general assemblies of the nation, but these were seldom held. These were of two kinds: those assembled under the orders of the Raja, and those assembled by the spontaneous will of the people. In the former case, messengers, who by right of birth and descent were entitled to that office, were despatched in all directions to summon the people. When assembled, they sat in a circle in the open air, while a number of Nayars kept guard over them. The propositions were then discussed, and the measures proposed were rejected or adopted by the unanimous silence or clamour of those present, but in affairs of minor importance not affecting the welfare of the whole community, the chiefs of the nation were summoned, and they decided the questions laid before them.

The assemblies summoned by the will of the nation were conducted in much the same manner, but with more impetuosity. They were held only in cases of emergency, when the Raja was guilty of extreme tyranny or of gross violation of the law. Then all the landed proprietors were bidden to attend, and if any one dared to refuse to obey the summons, the assembly sentenced his houses, gardens or estates to be devastated. If he persisted in his disobedience, he would be deprived of his privileges and votes, and might even be sentenced to banishment. As the object of such assemblies was to thwart the will of the ruler, he on his side did all he could to obstruct their holding such assemblies. The Raja had no right nor power to prevent them by force of arms, but he sent *Pandara Patti* (servants of the rulers) to provoke them with all manner of annoyances and to pelt them with stones, sand, and dirt. The Nayars on guard did their best to keep off the assailants with their shields, and, if any one of them, provoked beyond endurance, were to strike or hurt one of the youths, it would be regarded as treason, and, as such, the assembly would be liable to a heavy fine and would be deprived of its inviolability. The Raja might then disperse them by force of arms; but if he failed to subdue them, they would all desert their allegiance. Allies and neighbours did their best to intercede between the parties and to secure for everyone his proper

rights. Thus did these *küttams* (assemblies) exercise a wholesome influence, and act as a powerful check upon the rulers and ministers of the middle ages.¹ They also dealt with wider questions of castes and other matters affecting the welfare of the people. In former times there were also minor councils of *Pramānis* or leaders of the people in every *Desam* exercising similar social functions. A survival of this system even now exists in every village, and their deliberations and decisions upon social matters and caste disputes have great weight. In important matters such as the outcasting of a member of the caste, etc., His Highness the Raja who has always been the social as well as the political head of the State would deliberate upon them with the help of the Brahman *vaidiks*, and his decisions become final. The individual who is placed under a ban is prohibited from entering any temple, bathing in the public tanks, and is, in short, ostracised.

The Rajas were in former times the fountain of all justice, but were assisted by *Karyakkars* or ministers and Brahmans in administering it. All caste disputes and offences were left to the caste assemblies to deal with, while civil disputes were either left to the arbitration of the caste assemblies or of three or four prominent men. There was no written code, but the punishments assigned by custom fitted the crimes, and they varied with the status of the caste and of the person. The nobles enjoyed the privilege of freedom from confinement. The Brahmans and women were never put to death; the former were punished for grave offences by loss of caste and banishment, and the latter by being sold as slaves. The punishment of death was reserved for such heinous offences as sacrilege, the wilful murder of a Brahman or a cow. The following is a summary of the account given by Duarte Barbosa, pp. 116—117, regarding the methods of dealing with criminals and the nature of the punishments inflicted on them in former times:—When any member of a low caste committed robbery about which a complaint had been made to the king or the governor, orders were issued for his apprehension, and if he was caught and he confessed his guilt, he was generally impaled. His head was severed, and the body being placed on its back, the arms and legs were fastened with ropes to four posts, while the multitude to show their contempt spat upon it. If, however, the malefactor was a Moor, he was beheaded. The

1. Letters from Malabar by J. C. Viesscher, pages 74-77.

stolen property went to the ruler of the State. If the stolen property was discovered after the escape of the thief, it was returned to the owner after a certain number of days, and a fourth part was appropriated by the State. If, however, a thief refused to confess his guilt, he was confined for a period of eight days during which every method of torture known to the keepers of the prisons was tried to extort his confession. If he continued in reiterating his innocence, it was left to the accuser to elect whether he should be let off or forced to undergo trial by ordeal. In the latter case, on an auspicious day, the accused would be allowed to bathe and recite his daily prayers, after which he was conducted to the idol in the temple. Before the idol he swore that he had not committed the theft nor did he know the guilty person, and plunged his two fingers up to the middle joint into a caldron of boiling oil. If he was burnt, he was accounted guilty of the crime; if unhurt, he was liberated. Another form of proving the guilt or innocence of a prisoner who would not confess his crime, was to make him thrust his hand into a mantle in which a sacred and poisonous snake had been wrapped and force him to lift it out. If he was bitten, he was guilty. A third form was the wading through a tank full of alligators before a pagoda at Palliport, fifteen miles north of Cochin, and if he survived he was considered innocent."¹ Concerning the procedure against the debtors, a curious custom seems to have prevailed, which is thus described by *Varthema*:—

"Let us suppose the case that some one has to pay me twenty-five ducats, and the debtor promises me to pay them many times and does not pay them. I, not being willing to wait any longer, nor to give him any indulgence, shall take a green branch in my hand, shall go softly behind the debtor, and with the said branch shall draw a circle on the ground surrounding him; and if I can enclose him in a circle, shall say to him these words three times: 'I command you by the head of the Brahmans and the king that you do not depart hence, until you have paid me and satisfied me as much as I ought to have from thee,' and he will satisfy me or truly he will die without any other guard, and should he quit the said circle, the king will put him to death."

"It has been already said, that the nobles enjoyed exemption and privileges, and that they could not be taken and put in irons; but if a noble were to rob or kill any one or a cow or to sleep with a woman of low caste or of the Brahmans

1. Letters from Malabar by J. C. Vischer, pages 68-69.

or if he ate and drank in the house of a low caste-man or spoke ill of the king, and if any one of these were established in his own words, the king would call three or four honorable gentlemen and have him put to death. After he was dead, they laid him on his back, to place the king's warrant on his breast. If he was left dead in the country, the dead was so exposed as a prey to vultures and dogs. If he was put to death in the city, the dead body was allowed to be removed either as a mark of favour, or on payment of fine, by the citizens with the king's permission. If, on the other hand, he commits any other offence, he would be dealt with in the same way as any criminal already described."

Cruel as the administration of justice might appear to be in ancient times, many early writers bear testimony to the fact that private property was as secure in the fourteenth century as it is to-day, and that security and justice were firmly established in the land. Varthema was impressed with the honesty of the inhabitants; and the favourable testimony of the previous writers was confirmed by Pyrard-De-Laval, a Frenchman, who remarked that justice was well administered and awarded gratuitously. These systems have been completely forgotten and given place to the institution of regular courts, where justice is administered in accordance with the principles of British jurisprudence.

From the earliest times, even perhaps before the Aryan immigration, there appears to have been a complete military organisation among the Sudras of Malabar. The country was divided into *Náds*, or principalities, and the smallest territorial unit in it was a *Désam* (or village) presided over by a *Désavázhi* (ruler of a *Désam*). Each of the *Désams* and *Náds* was designated by the allotted quota of Nayars it was required to put into the field. The names of these divisions, even after the long lapse of time, have not been forgotten. The authority of the chiefs of these military divisions, large and small, was hereditary in their respective families and they had appropriate titles of distinction. They were not always in attendance on the Raja's person. If not required on particular State duties or religious services, they were called out for offensive or defensive warfare.

A chief was not considered a *Nádavázhi* (ruler of a *Nad*), who had not at least a hundred soldiers attached to him,

and one with less than that number was called a *Désavdzhi*. There were in those days no taxes levied from the people, and the chief from the Rajas down to the *Désavdzhi* possessed demesne lands for their support which were cultivated either by themselves or leased to *kudiyáns* or tenants; but the following were the chief sources of income, based upon feudal rights and privileges. The rulers levied custom duties upon exports and imports, taxes upon houses of fishermen, tradesmen and professional men. Criminal fines went to fill their coffers, and succession duties were levied upon the estates of deceased persons, especially those who held offices of State or rights over land. Outcast women were made a two-fold source of profit. Lewd adulterous women were made over to the chiefs with a premium for the trouble of looking after them, and the chiefs used in turn to sell the women to foreign merchants as slaves or wives to *Chettis*. The estates of persons who died without heirs were escheated, nor could an heir be adopted without the Raja's consent, for which a fee was generally levied. Protection fees from strangers and merchants were levied under various names and customary presents were the ruler's dues on occasions of feast or funeral. Wrecks were his perquisites, and various animals his monopoly. Concerning the former, Marco Polo wrote about the kingdom of Eli, "And you must know that if any ship enters the estuary and anchors when she has been bound for some other port, they seize her and plunder the cargo. They say that you are bound somewhere else, and it is God that sent you hither to us, so we have a right to all your goods, and think it no sin to act, thus. This naughty custom prevails all over the Provinces of India, to wit, that if a ship be driven by a stress of weather into some other port than that to which it is bound, it is sure to be plundered. But if a ship came bound originally to the place, they received it with all honour and gave it protection."¹ The custom of the taking of ships and cargoes lasted down to recent times, until the English factory at Telli-cherry entered into agreements with three of the country-powers for the exemption of English vessels from such seizures.

Among the animals that became the property of the Raja were cows with three or five dugs, cattle that has killed a man or other animals, cattle with a white spot near the corner of

1. Yulies Marco Polo, page 374.

the eye, buffaloes with white tips to their tails, wild elephants caught in traps and wild hogs that had fallen into wells.

Even in social matters, these chieftains had supreme powers. In the settlement of marriages in any part of the country, the Nayars had to obtain the chieftain's sanction, who held sway over the particular locality. The custom is even now in vogue though in a visibly weakened form. In the celebration of a *Kettu kalyanam* or *sambandham* in any part of the country, the parties concerned visited the chieftain and bought his consent with presents. For without such consent, no settlement and celebration thereafter could be arranged. His consent had to be procured even for the holding of festivals.

The chieftain's powers were so great that, if a wife living with her husband proved an object of attraction to another, adequate presents to the chieftain would buy him a formal writ, giving him the rights of a husband over that woman. Thus even so late as only a generation or two ago, the chieftain's power was exercised in the encouragement of polyandry.

When a tali-tying ceremony had to be performed for a girl of any decent family in a locality, she was taken to the local chieftain with a nuzzar or *tirumukdazhcha* and other things prepared for the festival that was to follow. In return the girl was given a golden bracelet which she was authorised to wear in his presence. No girl who had not received such a one could wear it.

In certain parts of the State people were afraid to erect buildings of more than one storey, lest they should incur the inexorable wrath of the chieftain; nor were they allowed to tile thatched houses. Departures from these customs were allowed only with the consent of the chieftain, embodied in a writ issued by him. In rural parts even to this day such restrictions are not totally inoperative. In the State His Highness the Raja gives his sanction in regard to some social matters even to this day and Nambutiri landlords exercise a similar authority among the tenants occupying their lands. Certain kinds of conveyances such as palanquins and dholies were reserved only for chieftains while the *Pallichans* were the only people who were employed to carry them. Various titles¹

1, Vide pages 28-20,

were conferred upon the people. These were, in brief, the rights and privileges¹ of the feudal chieftains of old.

The question regarding the existence in ancient times of a village organisation in the Cochin State, as in Malabar, is somewhat unsettled. Some are of opinion that the village communities of the east coast have no counterpart in the west, and that there were no regular villages; while others state that the organisation of the country for agrarian, civil, social, and administrative purposes was the ordinary type closely allied to the Tamil nationalities, the cradle of its races, languages, and institutions: and that it rested on the village system in its truest and simplest form. The earliest social organisation was apparently based upon the family group into which the various tribes or castes divided themselves, each with its more or less well defined territorial limits. The Brahmans were grouped in *grāmams* and the Nayars in *tharás* or *chérís*. The old territorial unit was a *désam* presided over by *Désavázhi* or *Jenmidar*, and a number of *désams* constituted a *nád* ruled over by a *Náduvázhi* or local chieftain who was subject to the Raja. The rights and privileges of the *Désavázhi* were: (1) the direction of the religious ceremonies of the village pagodas, (2) the management of the village pagoda lands and servants, (3) the control of marriages and other ceremonies in the village, and (4) the superintendence of all offences of the *désam* or village. He had besides the civil direction of the religious and military affairs of the villages. The same head-man was a *Désavázhi* or *Jenmi* according as he exercised all or only the first two functions in the village. The *Náduvázhi* was the military chief of his *nád* who was bound to attend the Raja and to march wherever he was directed with all the fighting men of his territory under the control of *Désavázhis* of their respective villages. In time of peace he collected the ordinary and extra revenue, and was helped by one or two accountants. Thus an old typical village was one which consisted of the houses of the military class of Nayars and of those of other low castes, the members of which, like the medieval guilds, were bound together by the ties of common interests, rendering to one another reciprocal services for a share of the village produce, and for the protection which they enjoyed. The village in

fact contained all the rudiments of the State. There was the head-man with his assistants whose duties have been already mentioned. There were also the hereditary village servants (*cheria jenmakkárs*), the village Panchayets or *kúttams*, and the *Kavalai* system of police, and the village watchmen (*kával-kkárs*) with their grain fees, and sacred institutions, with their usual privileges. And finally there were independent Nayar chieftains with their private properties and usual sources of income and taxation.

The village life is simple, delightful, and charming, but it is gradually passing away under the influence of western civilization. It is therefore of some ethnographical interest to preserve an account of it at its period of transition.

The village education may first be taken for treatment. The old village school or pial school masters were called *Ezhuttachans* or *Asáns*, some of whom were maintained by the leading families on small monthly allowances and meals, while others owned schools and lived upon the income derived from the pupils thereof. The education of youths commenced at a very early period, for which an auspicious day, nay, an auspicious hour, generally the *Vijaya Desami* or *Vidyárambham* (beginning of the alphabet) day, the last day of *Desara* in the month of *Kanni* or *T'hulám* (September-November) was chosen, when the local *Asán* or any fairly educated man was invited to give the boy his first lesson. In a conspicuous part of the building a bell-metal vessel was placed. On this was spread a thin layer of rice, and on each side of the vessel was placed a bag of rice and paddy, while a lighted lamp was also placed beside it. In front of these sat the infant scholar three or five years of age. The *Asán* or the teacher wrote on the boy's tongue with a gold coin (*fanam*) the divine invocation *Hari Sree Gana Patu Ye Namah* (Salutation be to Vishnu, Saraswati and Ganapati). The initiation was completed by the teacher holding the boy's ring finger and tracing the letters of the alphabet in the rice in the vessel. The ceremony would then come to an end with a feast to the inmates of the house as well as to friends and relations. After this, he was placed under a teacher who taught him along with others to write the letters of the alphabet on sand. This would go on for a month or two until the

youngster got a mastery of the letters. Then he was taught to read and write short sentences on cadjan leaves (*Ola Ezhutal*). He was made to commit to memory short verses, and lessons in arithmetic were added to his curriculum. Thus the youngster acquired a fair knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic, in about two years, and was thereafter recommended to an advanced course of studies, which consisted of a study of Sanskrit, the perusal of the *Purānas*, and also arithmetic sufficient to enable him to calculate the position of planets and help him in the casting of horoscopes. Girls also were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and singing, and were encouraged in the reading of the *Purānas*. Such in brief was the course of instruction imparted in these small institutions.

The schools were flimsy sheds with little or no furniture, while the boys sat on small mats or on the floor, which was covered with sand for purposes of writing. The teacher had a raised seat from which he supervised and listened to the loud recitations of the lessons set on the previous evenings. The boys went to him, one by one, repeated their lesson, and received another written by him on the palm leaf, which was to be learnt during the day. The school hours were generally from seven to ten in the morning and again from two to five in the afternoon. During the latter hours, the budding scholars were instructed in the reading of the Ramayana and other *Purānas*; and before the end of the lessons for the day, the boys were made to repeat with one voice, some mathematical formula. At home, the boys revised their work and recited the names of Gods and short verses as prayers to them. They had no work for about 12 days in the month, besides the usual Hindu holidays. Twice during the month, when the fortnightly holidays commenced, *i. e.*, on *Dvādesi* (the 12th day after the full or new moon), the teacher was remunerated by each boy with the payment of an anna or two, and even this was sometimes evaded by the opportune absenting of some pupils. He also received presents of cloth with a rupee or two from some of the richer families to which a few of his pupils belonged. Boys were subjected to a rigorous course of discipline; caning was freely resorted to as a mode of correction, and the teacher was often regarded with terror rather than with respect and admiration. Their only books were manuscripts on cadjan leaves; their

only training was the training of the memory, and the learned pedagogue never bestowed a thought on cultivating the thinking powers or the originality of his pupils. But this type of school and school-master is fast disappearing under the modern regime of elementary schools.

Next in importance to the school-master is the Kaniyan, an indispensable factor in the affairs and ceremonies of the village.¹

Then come the artisan classes whose services are necessary in the construction of houses, and the making of implements of agriculture. They were paid for their work either in kind or in coin.

The other men of importance in the village economic life were the physician, the village washerman, and the village barber. The village physician was a man of parts; for, not only did he tend the sick and the ailing, but also cast out devils from persons possessed, and with the aid of well prepared charms guarded them from the effects of the evil eye. The village washermen were of the Veluthédan and the Mannán caste. The services of the former were always requisitioned when people wished to become free from pollution, an act the omission of which leads to outcasting.

The village barber is another indispensable factor in the village ceremony and is employed for the shaving before all ceremonies. His privileges cannot be encroached upon by his own caste-men from other villages.

The village organisation above described is preserved to a certain extent even now and most probably the Kaniyan's profession will survive all other relics of Hindu institutions, as his services are considered to be of essential importance in matters of every day life.

The ordinary games pursued by the young men of the village are the foot-ball matches, *Attakalam*, *Kayyámkali*, and *Kaikottikkali* (a favourite circular dance of the women), *Uzhinjúl* and others, while cards and chess are common enough on festive occasions. Cock-fighting is an interesting pastime among the lower classes.

The most important of the village pastimes are the dramatic performances, a description of which is given in the following pages. The drama in Malabar sprang into being in

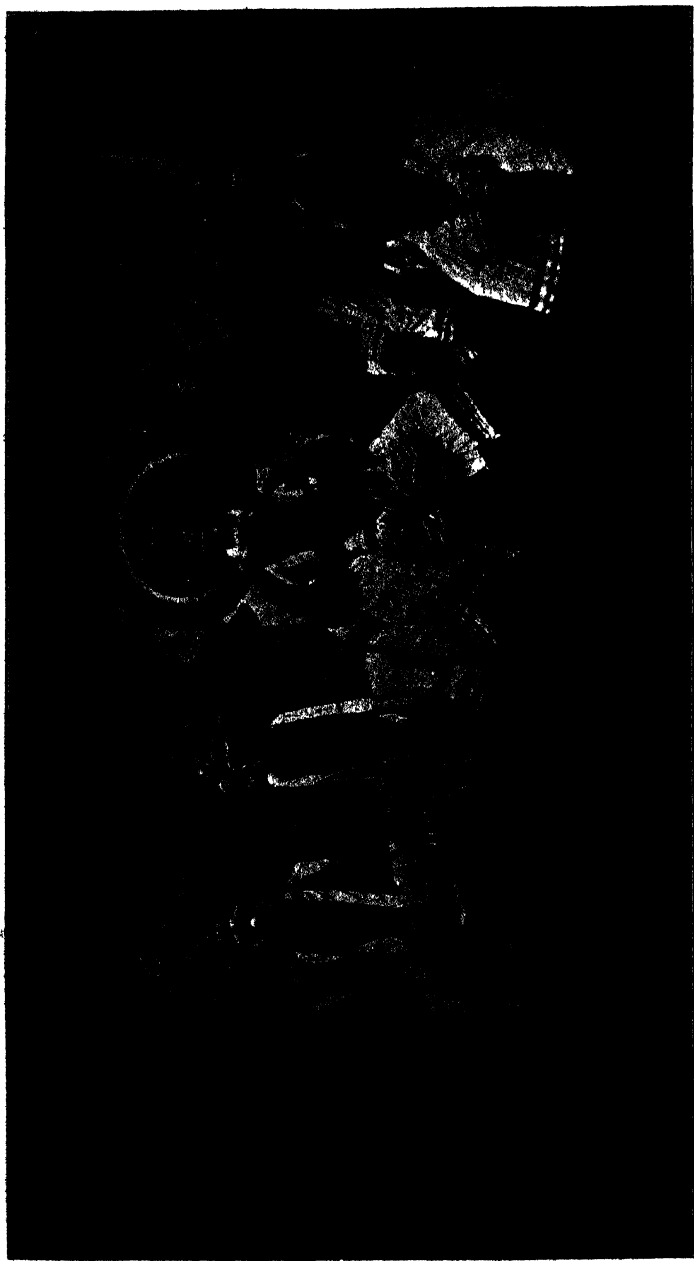
1. Vide my account of the Kaniyans, Vol. I, Chap. XI, pages 190-93.

the early ages, and *Krishnáttam* and *Rámanáttam* are among the earliest productions in the Malayalam literature. The origin of the former is interesting. A pious devotee, Vilvamangalattu Swámiyar, by name, resided in the temple of Guruváyúr in the Chaughat Taluk, which belonged to the Zamorin of Calicut. One of the Zamorins, while on a pilgrimage to the temple, asked the pious Swamiyar to show him the person of the God Krishna. On his wish being gratified, he was so much attracted by the handsome countenance of the divine 'Child God' that the Raja attempted to detain him by catching him by the head. But, alas, he vanished leaving in the hands of the Raja a single peacock's feather which had adorned the crown on his head. The Raja who was a great scholar determined to write a drama which would contain the life of Krishna—from his incarnation to his departure to heaven—and *Krishnáttam* was the outcome of that resolve. This play, which is seldom acted outside Calicut, takes eight days for its performance beginning as a rule, each night, at 10 p. m. and lasting until 3 a. m.

The cost of a night's performance is 64 fanams (eighteen rupees, four annas, and seven pies). Once it is said that when the actors went to Tripunathura, the residence of His Highness the Raja of Cochin, who had a night's performance in his palace, *Kámsavadham* (death of Kamsa, an *Asura* king, who was the maternal uncle of Krishna) was the play selected for the night; and to try the strength of the actor Krishna, a tusk-er who was brought to the stage was caught hold of by the tusks and killed. The play was never thereafter sent either to Cochin or Travancore.

The other play which is equal in importance to the one just described is the *Ramanáttam*, and was composed by the *Kottarakkara Tampuran*, a distant relative of the then ruling sovereign of Travancore. Once this prince asked the Zamorin of Calicut to send his actors for a few nights' performance in his own palace; but his request was refused on the plea that the prince as well as the southerners generally, were not able to appreciate so important and erudite a drama. This led to the composition of a play by the prince himself.

Plays, as a general rule, are not very popular at present, perhaps with the exception of the one kind which is now being



CHARACTERS OF MALABAR DRAMA (KATHA KATHA)

played. There are also other kinds of plays, which are called *Attakkathas* (plays in which the incidents are represented by dancing and gestures) in Travancore, and *Kathakalis* in Malabar. Many additions to these were made by different scholars in different times, and they now number about fifty-six, most of which are now being acted. Many or all of them possess a high order of literary excellence, and are, year after year, prescribed as vernacular text books for University Examinations.

Personal adornment of the actors.—In the beginning the actors had no regular dress as at present, nor was there any curtain dividing the audience from the stage. The only theatrical property known in those days were figures clumsily drawn upon the bark of the areca palm and attached to the bodies of the actors, while the orchestra consisted only of the *maddalam*, a kind of drum. But innovations were soon introduced, and the first of these were those introduced by the Tirúr or Bettattunad Raja.

It may not be out of place here to give a short sketch of a day's performance as it is to-day. A travelling company, which usually consists of twelve actors, four singers, and four musicians who form an "orchestra with drums (*maddalam* and *chenda*), gongs (*chengalam*) and cymbals (*elathalam*)", is invited and lodged in a house near which they are to give the performance. In the morning they are given gingelly oil for an oil-bath, and are then served with rice, *kanji*, and *pappadam*. This forms their breakfast. After it, they retire to sleep till about four o'clock in the afternoon. At five o'clock they are treated to a sumptuous dinner, and half an hour later begins, by beat of drums and other musical instruments of the company, a formal announcement to the villagers in the neighbourhood that a play is to be performed that night.

The stage is nothing more than a crude wooden structure slightly raised from the ground. The drop curtain consists usually of pieces of cloth sewn together and the figure of a god or an animal drawn thereon. The auditorium consists of mats strewn on the floor for the audience to sit on, while two bell-metal lamps, containing cocoanut-oil and wicks of rolled cotton cloth, are the only means of lighting the theatre. Sometimes to add to the solemnity of the occasion conch shells are

intermittently blown. Such are the crude theatrical properties which the actor has to face.

At about eight o'clock begins the *Thodayam purapád*, consisting of songs which are meant to initiate the audience into the mysteries of the plot. But this takes place behind the drop curtain, which has not yet been drawn up. Next comes the *Vandanaslókam*—a song in propitiation of some particular god—and then begins the play. The actors perform only by means of dumb-show, and the music is provided by the singers who, though invisible, are close at hand. All changes of thought, feelings, and emotions are conveyed by means of gestures of which there are said to be sixty-four different kinds, and in the commingling of these, lies the skill of the actor. Inhuman and unchivalrous acts, such as chopping off the noses and breasts of women, are usually enacted behind the scenes; though, in certain cases, these are made realistic by the characters to be victimised wearing false noses and breasts. It is not until the dawn of day that the play ends. The cost of a night's performance is only about fifteen rupees, while the cost of all the stock in trade is often less than 400 rupees.

A special innovation in this direction was made by the Valia Kovil Tampurán of Travancore and others who translated a few of the most important Sanskrit dramas. They introduced a real improvement in the construction of the stage and scenery, as also in the mode of dress, the style of music, and the method of acting, all of which were changes for the better. Dramatic companies were organised in many places where the plays were acted. They were at first very popular, but most of them disappeared as they did not play; but yet poets and versifiers still continue their work of producing plays for the stage.

Mohinfydtam.—This is an institution, very much like the nautch of the East Coast. A leader (*Nettuvan*) obtains the service of two or three young girls of low birth and trains them for the performance. He takes the girls from house to house, gets a paltry allowance for each day's performance, and thus makes a living. The performance is usually acted at night, when the girls, dressed in the gaudy attire, are led by the *Nettuvan* in an amorous dance. This is an abominable institution, and the women who are thus rented out are looked



OTTAMTHULAL

upon with contempt. It must be noted that they live separately, having little or nothing in common with the other classes, and that the institution is dying a silent and natural death.

Songs.—There have been very many songs current among the Nayars even from a very remote period; and they are chiefly composed and sung in honour of deities, and are mostly prayers addressed to them. A translation of these is not here attempted, for they lose much of their beauty, but the following, however, are the most important of them:—

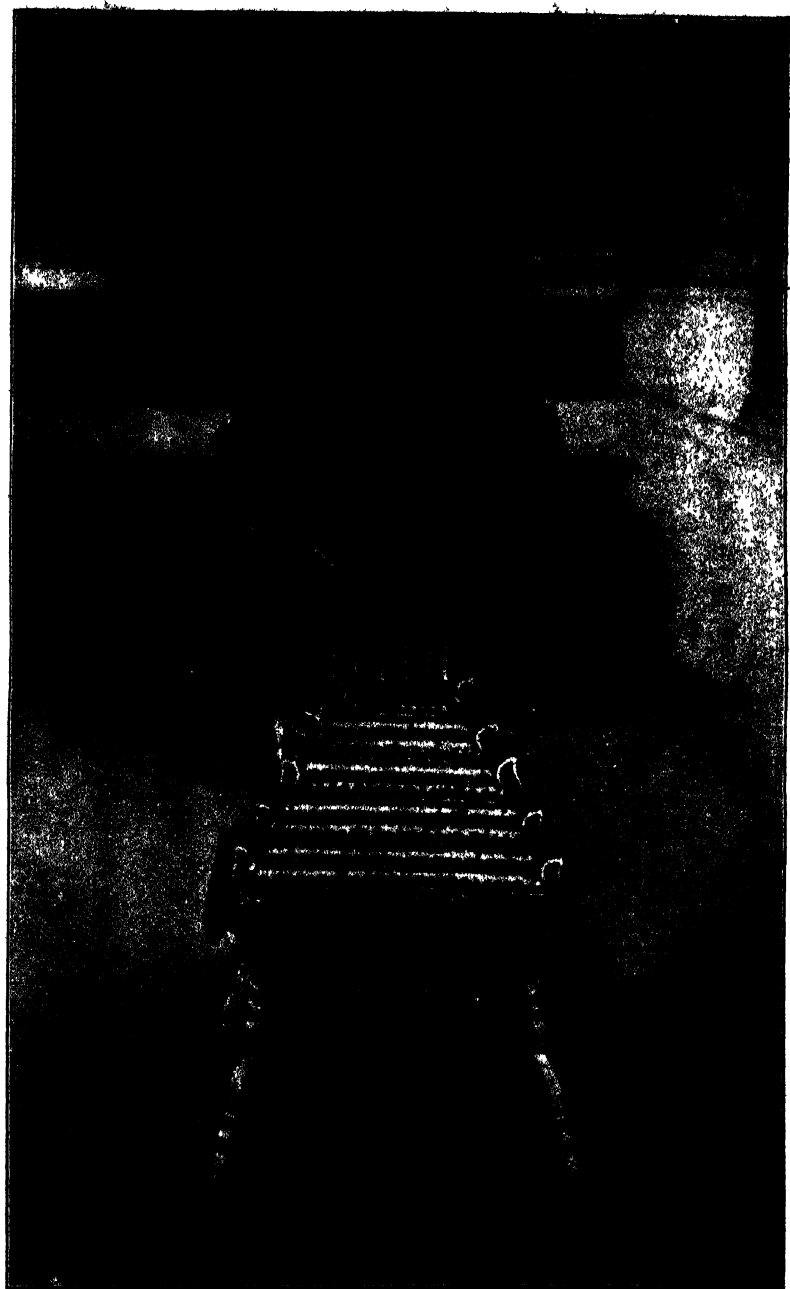
Bhadrakali Páttu:—These are songs which are sung in honour of Káli, and are supposed to have been composed by the Sudras of Palghat long before the Malayalam era. Certain dramatic songs also appear to have been composed about the same time, and refer to the deities on the hills as well as to the kings of the period. They are sung in towns and villages, between Anamala and Trichur in the east, and the Walayar forests on the other side. The ancient name of these localities was Cheranad, and it was the first place to be occupied by people, when Kerala was a marshy tract. As evidence of this, remains of houses are still to be seen at the foot of the hills. In a place of such historic importance were composed and sung these songs, which are so full of the ideas of the Vedanta and Yoga philosophies, and which give a clue to the nature of the people who once lived there. There is also another variety of songs referring to *Dárikavadham*, (murder of the demon Dárikan), and they are sung by a class of men called the *Kurippans*. There are also other old songs such as the *Sásta páttu* (songs in honour of Sásta).

Ganapati páttu (songs in honour of Ganapati) and serpent songs:—Among the old songs, those referring to agriculture, and composed during the third century of the Malayalam era, occupy a prominent place, and the agriculturists of the northern parts of the State even to-day follow the precepts laid down in these songs. But excepting, the song commemorating the deeds of *Meppayil Kunji Othenan*, the Robinhood of North Malabar, there are no songs which sing of the deeds of brave men.

The chief festivals.—(1). *Onam*:—This is an important national festival, which falls in the second half of August or the first half of September, and is celebrated in commemoration of Mahábali, an *Asura* king, whose reign is believed

to have been a period of uninterrupted peace, plenty, and prosperity. Growing jealous and apprehensive of the glory and greatness of this great king, the Dēvās entreated Vishnu to quell the pride of this earthly potentate; and Vishnu, thereupon, appeared as *Vāmana* (dwarf, his fifth incarnation) to request him for a plot of three feet of earth. The prayer was readily granted by the sovereign, who found to his cost that he could not satisfy him; for, large as his kingdom was, it was found to be very small when measured by the *Vāmana*, who eventually placed his foot upon his head and pushed him down to the regions below. Grieved at the loss of their dear king, his subjects prayed to Vishnu to allow him to re-visit the earth once a year, and this is popularly believed to happen on the *Tiruvónam* day.

The festival is celebrated in honour of his re-appearance, and with it the return of happy days. It is practically confined to four days which are observed as holidays throughout Kérala, and people of all ranks from the prince to the peasant acknowledge them as such. Ten days before *Tiruvónam*, signs of the approaching festival are visible in every Nayar house, which, by its neatness and cleanliness all around, puts on a gay appearance. A portion of the front yard of the house, opposite to the store-room, is selected, and there a temporary stall of mud is put up for the royal visitor to sit upon. Flowers are strewn over it and on the night previous to the auspicious day, pyramid-shaped images of the king made of wood or clay, called *Trikkúkarappan*, are placed upon it amid the deafening cheers of the members of the family who assemble at the gate to greet him. *Pujas* are daily made both in the morning and evening before the inmates take their meals, and this continues up to the closing of the festival. In respectable families the festival opens with the presents of cloths by the *káranavans* to the junior members of the family as well as to other close relations, servants, and others. This is also the occasion when tenants make gifts of curry-stuffs, chiefly banana, for the celebration of the festival, and they are often rewarded with cloths and also fed. A feast is held on a large scale, all the four days, while the essential element in it is the consumption of bananas or *nentranpazham*. The fruits are cut into two or three pieces, boiled in water, and are eaten alone or with *pappadam*.



MAHADEVAR.

Another peculiar feature of this festival is that all the male and female members of the family sit apart at meals. By mid-day the principal meal is over, and each goes dressed in fine attire now, seeks the amusement most congenial to him. Field-games, such as hand-ball or rounders, personal combats, games of chess, dice, and cards, dancing by females, and music parties constitute the leading forms of enjoyment from morning until evening.

Hand-ball matches.—A small stick is planted at a fixed spot, and the young men divide themselves into two rival parties. A member of one party stands at the post, while the others stand away from it. The ball which is usually made of coir rope is thrown by a member of one of the opposing party, and on its being struck by the man at the post, the others attempt to catch it before the bounce or stop its onward career. If the ball hits the post, or if any member of the opposing party catches the ball before it has touched the ground, that player's turn is over. Another man takes his place and so on, until all the members of one party have had their turn. Then the rival section begins to play exactly in the same manner and under the same rules as before.

Combats are of two kinds, namely, those between single adversaries, and those held in batches. In the first, the people of one locality divide themselves into two parties. When the match is opened, the leader of one group brings forward a trained pugilist who goes into the intervening open space, between the two groups, challenging any one from the opposite camp to meet him in fair fight. A little while after, some one from the other party takes up the challenge, and then the combat begins. The victor is rewarded with presents of cloths and money by the rich and generous members of the community assembled there. The same process is continued till the close of the day. In Palghat the *Onam* games are of a rougher character; the tenants of certain landlords turn out each under their own leader and engage in sham fights in which there is much rough play.

There is also another amusement, in which a peculiar bow, formed of a strong and slightly elastic wood with a split bamboo finely polished for the string, is used. By means of a

stick, it is possible to produce a kind of musical tone, for which a party is organised to play on it. This entertainment is much admired, and interests the people very much.

(2). *Tiruvátira*:—This is another important national festival, which falls on the *Tiruvátira* day in Dhanu (December-January). This concerns the Nayar women, and is said to commemorate the death of *Káma Déva*, the cupid of Indian mythology, by the burning fire of the third eye of the God Siva. Before day-break the festive day, the young women of the Nayar families hasten to the nearest tank or river for bathing, and during the bath, they amuse themselves with *Tiruvátira páttu*, songs accompanied by regular splashing of water, supposed to be symbolical of beating of the breast, on account of their grief for Kama's death. At day-break, they return home, and, gaily dressed and adorned, they go to the nearest temple for worship. After a slight breakfast, they proceed to enjoy the *Uzhinjal* (a swinging apparatus made of bamboo and attached to a horizontal branch of a tree). Immense pleasure is taken in this game. The family dinner is at noon, when bananas, sliced and fried in cocoanut-oil, seasoned with salt, are freely distributed among the friends and relatives assembled there. Ripe plantains, and the sweet preparation of arrow-root flour purified and seasoned with jaggery or sugar and cocoanuts, also form one of the chief items of the feast.

(3). *Vishu*:—Next in importance to the two great national festivals just described, comes *Vishu* on the first of Medam (March-April), which is the astronomical new year's day; and a man's prosperity during the year is believed to depend on his seeing some good and lucky thing on the *Vishu* morning. It is the custom to prepare on the night previous, what is known as *Kani*. A bell-metal vessel (*uruli*) is taken, and in it are arranged a *grantha* or cadjan manuscript, a gold ornament, a new washed cloth, some flowers of the *konna* tree (*Cassia fistula*), some coins in a silver cup, a cocoanut cut into two, a cucumber, some mangoes, and a jack-fruit. On either side of the vessel, are also placed two lamps burning, while there is a plank of wood or some other seat placed in front of it. These are placed in the chief room inside the house, and in the morning, the members of the family, one by one, are taken to the



PARTY OF NAYARS TIMING ON BOWSTRINGS DURING ONAM FESTIVA

Kani with their eyes shut, and, when they are near it, are directed to open them and look at it. It is taken from house to house for the benefit of the poor. The *kāranavan* of the family gives small presents of money to the children, servants, and tenants. It is also the time honoured custom of the State that on this day the chief officials shall pay their respects to His Highness the Raja at his residence at Tripunattura, and receive presents of varying amounts. In former times, it was customary for all the subjects of the ruling princes to pay their respects to their royal masters with some new year's gifts. This custom has disappeared, and in its place small presents are made by tenants and dependents to their landlords which generally consist of cocoanut, plantains, and other curry-stuffs—intended, probably as a contribution to the celebration. The day is marked by a grand feast for the members of the household as well as for the tenants and other dependents. To the Pulayans (the family workmen) are given paddy or rice, oil, etc., on the previous day to enable them to have their own celebrations.

(4). The *Dasara* or *Ayutha Puja*, called also as *Saraswati Puja*, falls in Kanni (September-October) at the autumnal equinox. It is a festival observed in honour of the Goddess *Saraswati*, and every man worships on the last day the implements of his craft and keeps the day a holiday. It is a nine day's festival and is called *Navaratri*.

(5). *Sivaratri*, which falls in Kumbham (February-March), is also an important festival which is observed in common with the members of other higher castes.

Important local festivals.—Of the festivals connected with the temples of the State, the most important is the cock-festival (*Bharani*) at the Cranganore Kali temple, an account of which is given in my notes on the Valans.¹

In addition to the *Utsavams* (festivals) held once a year in all important temples in the State, there are other popular festivals such as the *Pūrams* at Arattupuzha and Trichur, and the *Kongapada* at Chittur. A short account of the latter is given in the following pages.

The name signifies 'war with Kongan'. The festival falls on the Monday succeeding the Wednesday which immediately follows the new moon in the month of Kumbham (February-March) every year. It will

¹ The Kongapada festival of Chittur.

come off, therefore, either in the latter part of Kumbham or in the former part of the next following month of Meenam according as the new moon in Kumbham occurs earlier or later. The festival is said to be celebrated in commemoration of the victory obtained by the local deity, Bhadrakali, widely known by the local designation of Chittur Bhagavati, in a battle fought with the Kongans, the people of what was known in ancient days as the 'Kongu Desom' comprising the localities included in the present British District of Coimbatore, and lying to the north and east of the Chittur Taluk. The final engagement was fought in the eastern out-skirts of the present town of Chittur, and in it the Kongu chief called in the old songs by the simple name of 'Kongan' was slain by the Goddess with her own hand. The place of engagement is now marked by a small extent of rocky surface, on which is cut the figure of the Bhagavati's sword with which Kongan's head was cut off. The rock also shows two holes nearly a foot in depth, and six inches in diameter. These holes are pointed out by old people as having been made by the hoofs of the fore-legs of the Kongan's mount, which is described as a magnificent buff-bull, when the animal jumped on to the rock in the excitement caused by the fall of its master from its back slain by the Goddess. The buff-bull was also slain on the spot. The whole of the Kongu army was completely routed, and all stampeded to their country in utter confusion. In the course of the battle a few men on the side of the Bhagavati were also killed or wounded, among whom were four important persons belonging to four ancient families in Chittur, who appear to have been the leaders of the local militia. The dead bodies of these four and the wounded were taken from the field of battle and carried to the town and handed over to the respective families, the procession being led by the Goddess, who afterwards commanded the people to celebrate the victory every year, and after entering the temple disappeared into her image within. Tradition speaks thus of the origin of the war. The wealth of the 'Kongu Desom' chiefly consisted of chillies, turmeric, coriander, cumin seed, mustard, areca nut, etc. These commodities used to be exported for sale, in return for paddy, from Kongu Desom to Chittur, Palghat, and other places in large quantities

laden on the backs of mules, asses, bullocks and buffaloes. When once a large caravansary of Kongu laden with such commodities was passing through Chittur, the people of the four *desams* of Chittur, viz., Chittur, Nallepilli, Tattamangalam, and Pattancheri, robbed the Kongans of all their animals and goods. The chief of Kongu, on receiving the information, naturally felt indignant, and despatched an ultimatum to the *Pramānakkars* of Chittur, demanding the surrender of the animals and the articles, failing which, it was said, he would overrun the four *desams*, destroy the houses, and kill all people even including women and children. On receiving the ultimatum, the people went to the temple of the Goddess, and there read the document before the image of the Goddess. It was so read by a member of the Chittedath house, in whose custody, it is said, the original document, written in a copper plate, is still preserved. The reading of the ultimatum, transcribed in a piece of cadjan, before the Bhagavati, is one of the essential functions performed on the night of the Kongapada festival every year, and it is always done by a member of the Chittedath family, who dresses himself up in the fashion of a Kongan and acts the part of the Kongu chief. When the document was read and the people prayed to their Goddess in one voice for protection, the Goddess commanded from within the temple that her 'children' need not fear and that when the Kongan took steps to enforce his ultimatum, she would protect them. On receiving no reply to the ultimatum, the Kongan mobilized his men and crossed the Walayar river, the northern boundary of the Chittur Taluk. The information about the crossing of the boundary was first carried to the Chitturians by the Izhuvans of the vicinity, who were up the palmyra trees early in the morning for the purpose of tapping for toddy, and they in a body climbed down the trees, and without removing their breast protecting leather straps, tapping knives, mallets and ladders, ran to the four *desams* all in excitement. In view of the above fact, the advance portion of the day procession of the Kongapada festival is even to this day made up of a number of persons, mostly of the Chetti caste, belonging to the four *desams*, dressed up in the full toddy-tapping kit of the Izhuvans. They do so every year in pursuance of religious vows made by them for the attainment of particular

objects, such as recovery from illness, success in litigation, birth of children, etc.

When the information of the crossing of the Walayar by the chief of Kongu was communicated to the people of the four *desams* by the Izhuvans, they repaired to the temple in excitement and consternation, when Lo! the temple gates opened of themselves and a beautiful female form dressed in full battle armour, brandishing a shining sword and shedding a resplendent divine light, suddenly emerged out of the image within and marched off direct to meet the advancing army of the Kongan, followed by all the brave men among the people. The battle was fought with the result already mentioned. This battle is enacted on the night of the Kongapada festival as one of its essential functions, accompanied by the beating of numerous Pariah drums, blowing of horns, racing of horses, torch-light processions, besides, of course, the usual mischief-making among the youngsters, but the elders generally control them and stop excesses. In the course of the sham fight, some act as the wounded, some even as the dead and fall down on the field of action. These dead and wounded are immediately taken up and carried by the youngsters to their supposed respective houses in the town accompanied with torch-lights, beating of drums, beating of breasts, and crying and weeping. No outsider is allowed to take part in this sacred function. If an outsider, being possessed with any sudden fit of enthusiasm, attempts to take part in this function, 'woe be to him.' This battle function takes place at about 10 o'clock in the night and lasts for two or three hours. At the end of it, the night procession of the festival begins from the battle-field and moves through the Nayar quarters to the temple, where it reaches just before day-break, when there is a display of fireworks. After day-break, the chief of the place or *Nāduvāshi* represented by the Chambath house, accompanied by the people, go to the Goddess' temple to offer prayers of love and gratitude to the Bhagavati. The festival is wound up by a performance on the following night called '*Devendra pallu*' in which all the "one hundred Nayars"¹ of Chittur are

1. The Nayar community of Chittur is collectively called by the name of "Chittur Nooru Nayar." It shows that the original village organisation of Chittur consisted of one hundred Nayar houses or families. Although there is a considerable increase in the number of Nayar houses at present, the appellation 'Nooru Nayar' is still used.

supposed to take part under the supervision and guidance of the Srikandath Panikkar, whose family is the military instructor and leader of the people of Chittur. The Panikkar's duty is to train the youths of the 100 houses in the military arts. The performance referred to is, more or less, an exhibition of the bodily prowess of the youths trained by the Panikkar, and at the end of it he receives presents from the *Náduvúshi* and one hundred fanoms—one fanom for each house—from his pupils. The amount of one hundred fanoms is still paid to him every year, and is defrayed out of the collection made for the Kongapada festival for which the Panikkar's family is exempted from the payment of all subscriptions. The training of the youths of the place is begun a few weeks before the Kongapada festival in the *kalari* (military gymnasium) of the Srikandath Panikkar, and the Panikkar takes a prominent part in all the functions connected with the festival from beginning to end.

Once in a few years and commencing on an auspicious day after *Vishu*, this ceremony is performed on a grand scale, in which the Nayars of the town (one male member from almost every house) organised themselves into parties, one party for singing songs in praise of the Goddess Bhagavati, another for dancing before her, and the third for playing on musical instruments. These men have, during this period, to bathe early in the morning, cook their own food and remain under a vow to be ever in devotion to the deity. Preliminary to the celebration of the actual festival, which sometimes run for a number of days, the men are given 41 days' training in the several courses of dancing in the Porayattu family house, one of the four *Pramánakkars* (leading members) of the place, and the final performance takes place in the Pokkumarath house.

In the court-yard of the latter house a large pandal supported on 64 posts, is put up and in its middle is drawn a floral diagram (*padmam*) over which a lighted brass lamp, and in front of it a stool, are placed with a metal pot of water surmounted by a full pod of cocoanut flowers and a washed cloth arranged in the form of a beautiful crown. The Goddess, who is supposed to be located therein by means of holy *mantrams*, is propitiated every night between 9 and 12 P. M., with offerings and *pujas*, to the accompaniment of drumming, singing,

and dancing. This nightly routine of *pujas*, offerings, dancing, etc., is thus continued for the prescribed number of days.

On the morning following the last day, the votaries purify themselves by a bath and fetch branches of *pala* trees, and a dancing procession is organised, which wends its way through the Nayar streets, accompanied by the Goddess manifested through her *Velichapad*, to the temple of the Goddess, and from there disperse to their respective houses before evening after singing songs of praise and thanks-giving in honour of the Goddess. A pit, 15 feet long, 5 feet broad and 3 feet deep, is then made and filled with ten to fifteen cart-loads of fuel which is burned and reduced to glowing red hot charcoal. Here also is performed a *pūja*. At about 4 A. M., the *Velichapad* through whom the Goddess manifests herself, the priests, the votaries, and lastly the caste-men, all walk over the fire several times.

The day dawns and the senior member of the Porayattu family sitting on the stool consecrated to Bhagavati, and covering his head with the silk cloth of the deity, propitiates her with offerings of fruits, cocoanuts, and fowls. The whole ceremony is thus brought to an end. The object of this propitiation is to protect people from the attacks of cholera, small-pox, and other epidemics.

Before closing this part of the subject, it may be noted that the agricultural year begins with the *Vishu* (first of Medam, about the middle of April) at which the hot weather is supposed to terminate. In families where the members pursue agriculture as a profession, they send for the local *Kaniyan* (astrologer), who estimates by astronomical calculations the agricultural prospects and the probable quantity of rain during the ensuing year. He is also asked to choose an auspicious day for ploughing, and on that day the master of the house goes to the seed-store with his Pulayan slaves and takes out a small quantity of each variety of seed, which he puts in a cup made of the leaves of the *kanniram* (*nux vomica*); he then places the cups in a basket near a lamp in the yard and places a small heap of rice around or near it. A new ploughshare fastened to a plough, and a pair of oxen are also brought, and these are painted with rice water. They are then taken in procession to the field, on reaching which the

Agricultural cere
monies.

Pulayan head-man raises a mound of earth on which are thrown a little manure and a handful of seed. He then yokes the cattle to the plough and turns a square plot of ground, taking care to have furrows made in it, and the plough dropped on the right. Ganapati is then propitiated with offerings, and the master throws the seed in the furrow, when the Pulaya head-man invokes the blessings of the gods and the deceased ancestors on the seeds that have been sown broadcast, on the cattle that are let loose, and also on the members of the family, and prays them for a good crop, much sunshine, and a good harvest. A cocoanut is then cut on the plough-share, and if the hind portion is larger than the front one, it predicts an excellent harvest. If the nut is cut into two equal portions, the harvest will be moderate; if the cut passes through the eyes of the nut or if no water is left in the cut portions, misfortune is foreboded. The portions of the cocoanut are then picked up with the milk inside them and a leaf of the *tulsi* plant (*Ocimum sanctum*) is dropped into each; if the leaf turns to the right, a prosperous harvest is assured; if to the left, the contrary. The ceremonial concludes with loud shouts and invocations to the gods of husbandry; and the unused seeds are distributed among the workmen.

Nira :—The bringing in of the first fruits (*Nira*) is celebrated at the end of Karkadagam (August), previous to which the doors and windows of the houses are cleansed with the leaves of a tree called *paragam* (*Ficus hispida*) and decorated with rice flour, while the walls are white-washed, and the yard smeared with cow-dung. On the gates of the houses are placed various kinds of flowers together with their leaves and branches; viz :—*athi* (*Ficus racemosa*), *ithi* (*Ficus venosa*), *arayâl* (*Ficus religiosa*), *peral* (*Ficus Indica*), *illi* (young bamboo leaves), *nelli* (*Phyllanthus Emblica*), *jack* (*artocarpus integrifolia*), and *mango* (*manganefera indica*). On the morning of the ceremonial day, the priest of the temple comes out preceded by a Marar blowing a conch-shell, when a bunch of the ears of paddy already placed by the Pulayans outside the outer wall of the temple is taken by him to the temple with the same Marar blowing the conch. Every house-holder then sends out to the fields a man duly purified by a bath and smeared with ashes to gather some rice. As he brings it to

the gate of the houses, he is met by a woman with a lighted lamp and some leaves on which is placed the rice. This is carried into the yard in procession, while those assembled cry out, 'Fill, fill, increase, fill the house, fill the basket, fill the stomach of the children'. Three times is it carried on a plantain leaf placed on a wooden plank while the lighted lamp is placed on the right. Ganapati is then propitiated with offerings, and stalks of paddy with ears of grain in them are stuck with cow-dung to the various parts of the house, to the agricultural implements, and even to trees. A sumptuous breakfast brings the ceremony to a close.

Puthari:—The next ceremony is the formal cooking and eating of the new rice (*Puthari*). It sometimes takes place on the *Nira* day, but generally it is an independent festival. An auspicious day is chosen as soon as the first crop is harvested and threshed—a day which must be before the *Onam*. The rice is cooked and eaten with a special curry made of *tagara* (Cassia tora) peas, the fruit of *puthari chunda* (*Swertia Cherata*), brinjals (*Solanum Melongena*) and green pumpkin.

Ucharal:—At the end of Makaram (January-February), when the second crop has been harvested, the year's agricultural operations are supposed to be over, and Mother Earth, *Bhūmi Dēvi*, is considered to rest during the hot weather until the first shower begins. At the beginning of this period the Malayali observes a festival in honour of the Goddess' menstruation, which, like the *Roman Februria*, is supposed to take place at this time. On the last three days during this festival, all granaries are closed, paddy is not sold, and no implement of agriculture is touched, while even the rice to be eaten during these three days is pounded before-hand. On the first day before sunset the granaries are closed, some thorns and shrubs of broom are fixed to the door and cow-dung and ashes are spread in front of it. The next two days are holidays for all; the house must not be swept, nor the floors smeared with cow-dung, and the garden even may not be swept or watered. On the fourth day the granaries are opened, and a basketful of leaves is taken to the field and burnt with a little manure perhaps to indicate that the cultivator remains in possession.

Ucharal is the date on which all agricultural leases should expire, and demand for surrender of property should not be made at any other time, but the courts, by a liberal interpretation, have extended the term up to the day of *Vishu*. Special *Ucharal* festivals are held at Cherpulasseri in the Walluvanad Taluk and near Shoranur, at which straw models of cattle are taken in procession to the temples of Bhagavati.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

The high caste Nayars profess Hinduism and follow most of the religious practices of the Brahmins whose influence in matters religious as well as social is supreme all over the State. They worship the superior deities of the Hindu pantheon (Siva, Vishnu, and their consorts, as also Ganapati) in *ambalams* or *kshetrams* (temples) of which there are in the State many that have long been in existence. Everywhere in the State, the caste-men and women with their children may be seen going to worship the deities in their local temples both morning and evening after their baths in the public tanks. It is only after this worship that they take their meals, and seldom do they depart from this rule. They also adore the minor deities, namely, Subramanian, Ayyappan, Sástha or Vettakkorumakan, Bhagavati, as well as Kali, the goddess of small-pox, and malignant demons, such as, Kutticháttan, Mundian, Gulikan, Gantákaranan. But these deities or demons are located in *kávus*, mere unpretentious structures with the characteristic tiled roofs and ornamental gables. These deities are represented by carved or uncarved pieces of stone placed on elevated seats beneath the *ál* (*Ficus religiosa*), the *pala* (*Echites scholaris*), or the *kánniram* (*strychnos*), and the priest is usually a non-Vedic Namburi, an Elayad, a Músaḍ, or one of the Sudra castes. The deities such as Subramanian and others above mentioned, are the sons of Siva, and require no animal sacrifices, but the host of demons require to be propitiated with offerings of goats, or fowls, while their wishes are often interpreted by oracles, who are known as *velichapads*.

The Cochin State, as well as Malabar and Travancore, is the land of magic, sorcery, and witchcraft, and as well as

belief in animism, and all these are largely mixed up with the religion of the Nayers. Animism refers to the belief that man passes through life surrounded by a ghastly company of powers, elements, and tendencies, impersonal in character, mere shapeless phantoms of which no image can be made and no idea can be formed. Most of these have departments or spheres of influence of their own—one presides over cholera, another over small-pox, yet another over cattle disease, some dwell in rocks, others haunt trees, and others again haunt rivers, whirlpools and waterfalls. All of them require to be diligently propitiated by reason of the ills and calamities which they bring about, and the essence of these practices is magic.

Evidence of a wide-spread belief in the worship of ancestors is to be seen in the *kistavens* (*thoppi kallús*)—the rock caves containing the sepulchral urns found in the jungles and other parts of the State—in the ceremonies performed and the offerings made for the spirits of the dead. They are worshipped even now in special *kávús*, sometimes even in small out-houses or special rooms in the house on new moon days or *Sankrántis*, and there are also periodical commemorations on the anniversaries of the ancestor's death. Dead ancestors are also represented by stones or small images of gold or silver kept in the middle room of the Nayar houses, and offerings of food and drink are made to them on new moon and *Sankránti* nights. Animistic again is the worship of *Káli* or *Bhagavati* who presides over small-pox, cholera, and the thousand maladies that flesh is heir to, the worship of animals and plants and lastly the belief in exorcism and witchcraft in which Brahmans also share.

Serpent shrines (*Nágattún kávús* or *Nagakóttas*) are to be found in the compounds of every Nayar house in the Cochin State, and their worship occupies a prominent place in the religious life of the Nayers and other castes. The following mythical origin is ascribed to the adoration of serpents in the Keralaólpathi.

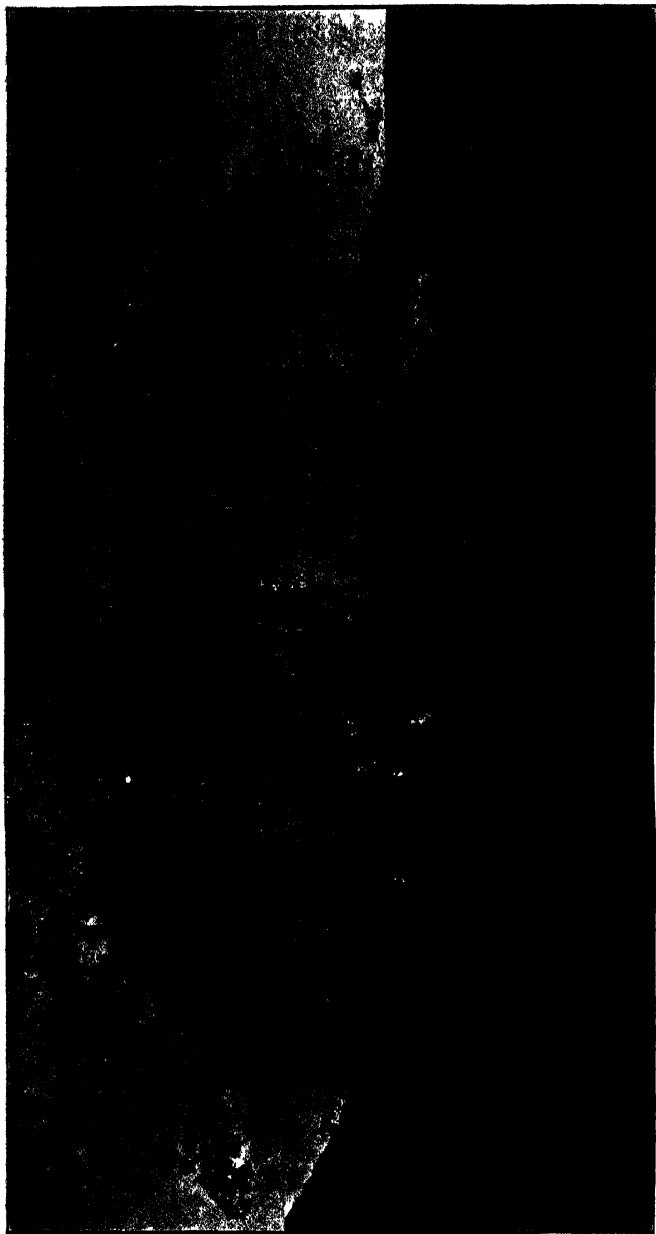
The first Aryan colonists settled by *Parasurama* found Kerala absolutely uninhabitable, and finding it impossible to improve their condition, returned to their old country. After their departure, the *Nágas* (or serpent gods) of the lower world or *Páthala* took possession of the partly reclaimed land and settled

thereon. The early colonists, on a second venture, finding the land occupied, commenced a war against the Nágas, but Parasurama acting as arbitrator, decided in favour of the early colonists, and ordered that they should set apart a corner of every compound as an abode of the serpent gods. He further ordained that these allotted places were to remain virgin-ground, untouched by the blade of the knife or the prong of the fork, while the under-wood and the creepers were to be allowed to grow in wild profusion, and to such the name *kávu* (grove) was given. In it are generally planted several stone idols of serpents placed on a stone-basement called *chitrakúdam*, the whole being held sacred and reserved by a low wall round it to prevent cattle or children straying into that space. The propitiation of serpents is deemed essential to the prosperity and well-being of every house-holder, and periodical offerings are made to them, while the neglect of these is considered to cause leprosy, sterility, or ophthalmia, among the members of the family. These serpents are therefore regarded as tutelary deities of the family, and the gods along with the shrines are conveyed with the property and frequently specified in deeds of transfer.

The high priest of the serpent cult is the Pámbu Mékkát Nambuthiri, who lives in a house full of cobras which are said to be harmless to his family. Whenever an image of a serpent from a grove has to be removed from one place to another, he is sent for on the belief that he alone can do it after due propitiation and offerings, and any tree that is cut down for this removal must be sent to the local temple to be used as fuel. The serpent grove should not be polluted by a member of the low caste, or by a woman during her menses; and when it is so polluted or otherwise spoiled, a member of the family of the Nambuthiri priest has to be informed. He gazes into a vessel filled with oil, points out the evil and suggests the remedy. The ninth asterism in every month is specially selected for snake worship in Nayar families, when offerings of milk and water are made to them. It is said that the approach of a woman during her menses will cause serpents to vacate the grove because of the impurity, and Pulluvans are required to sing songs and perform certain ceremonies to cause them to re-enter the shrines. Images of these serpents are sometimes



CRANGANORE BHAGAVATHI TEMPLE.



A TYPICAL KAVU.

made even of gold or silver and consecrated for worship in Brahman houses. They are also presented to Brahmans by those on whose date of birth an eclipse falls, and this is done to mitigate the wrath of Ráhu.

Cases of snake bite are of frequent occurrence in the northern parts of the State where snakes abound; and nowhere else is the Hindu treatment so skillfully practised as to effect a radical cure by medicines and incantations. When information regarding snake bite is conveyed to a physician, or a bitten man is taken to him, the latter can, by the chirping of a lizard or other tokens, make out the nature of the case and also whether it is curable or not. It is said that physicians should not go to a patient's house, and the following story is given in explanation:—

Once when the emperor Parikshit was ordained to be bitten by the great serpent Takshaka, the latter set out in the disguise of a Brahman. On his way he met another Brahman, who, on enquiry, turned out to be a physician on his way to cure the king. With a view to test his ability, Takshaka bit a tree which was at once reduced to ashes, but the physician removed the poison, and the tree regained its former state. Takshaka, admiring his ability, loaded him with immense wealth and dissuaded him from going to the king. He also made him promise that he should never volunteer his services in such matters unless patients were taken to him. In some families the profession is hereditary, the most prominent among them being the families of Kokkára Nambuthiri and Máliyakal Karta.

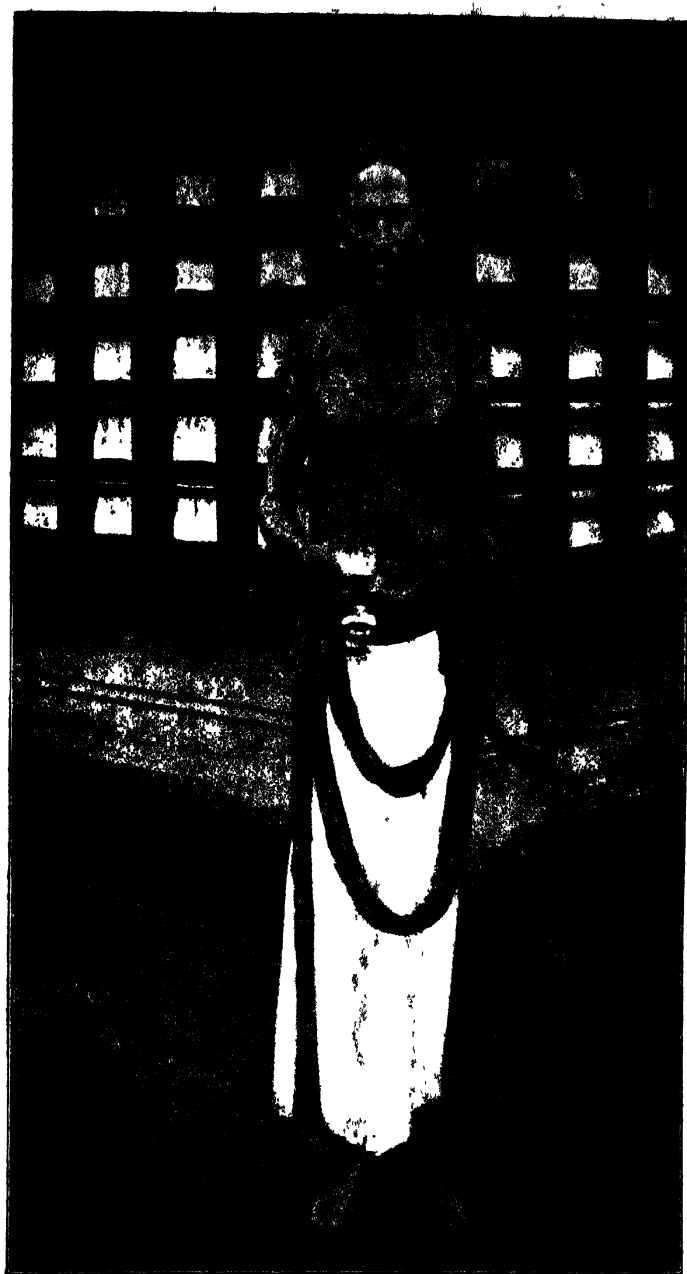
In every village are to be found guardian deities that protect the villagers from the malevolence of demons which are supposed to occupy an intermediate place between gods and men. The temples of the Nayers in which are enshrined these village deities or *Grāma-dévatās* are far less imposing than those of the Brahmans and are called *kávus*. The deities commonly represented are the consort of Siva or some manifestation of that female divinity, and Ayyappan or Sasta; and these are supposed to keep in subjection the demons and spirits which are ever prone to do harm to the people of the village. Thus, though the demons are objects of worship, the propitiation of the guardian deities and the festivals held in their honour are considered to be sufficient to curb

Tutelary deities.

the malignant propensities of those spirits. The most popular of the festivals is the *Mandalam*, which begins on the first of Vrischigam (middle of November) and lasts for forty-one days. In addition to the daily *pújas* to the image of Bhagavati by Brahman priests, special rites and ceremonies (*Kálamezhuthum Pattum*) are also performed by a particular class of Sudras to the figure of the goddess made on the floor by means of coloured powders, while the devotees sing songs in her praise to the accompaniment of lute-like musical instruments. A man in a fantastic dress with an array of jingling bells round his loins, heavy sounding bell-metal anklets on each foot and a scythe-shaped sword in his hand impersonates the goddess and dances to the sound of tom-toms round the figure of the goddess Bhadrakáli on the floor. The *Velichapád*, as he is called, becomes highly excited and in his frenzy sometimes even cuts his forehead and causes it to bleed. He speaks, or rather the deity speaks through him, in broken yet commanding tones wholly unlike his own and makes oracular responses to the enquiries addressed to him.

On a night in the latter part of the month of Dhanu (early in January), a golden image of the goddess is placed on the back of a big decorated elephant, and, amidst the beating of drums, the firing of pop-guns and crackers, is taken out in procession. The elephant with the goddess is supported on each side by elephants whose numbers vary according to the means of the villagers. The *Velichapád* is indispensable and is accompanied by a group of well-dressed women and girls, each carrying in her hand a plate (*tálam*) full of rice and a light placed on the top of it. The festival ends with a display of fire-works, and the ceremony closes with the sacrifice of goats or fowls. On the same principle but on different lines are celebrated various propitiatory and sacrificial festivals in honour of the other aforesaid deities. Generally, after the harvests, the *Velichapáds* are taken out in procession to the Hindu houses in each village to receive offerings of a measure of paddy and small coins.

Sásta or *Ayyappan*.—According to Keralólpathi, Parasurama with the object of protecting the newly created country (Kerala) is said to have established many temples and dedicated them to this deity. The most important of these is at Sabarimala in the Chengannur Taluk of Travancore, which



A VELICHAPADU

attracts a very large number of pilgrims during the *Mandala pūja* from Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. This deity is peculiar to these parts, where he has the largest number of worshippers.¹

[The worship of the tutelary deities above described is to a very great extent the outcome of a belief in, and a constant fear of, the influence of demons

Demon worship.

and evil spirits on mankind, a belief which has existed from a very remote period. The worship of demons is confined to the lower orders and has no connection with the higher forms of Hinduism, and yet this belief in demons is so wide-spread that not even the Brahmans are free from it. In every part of the State, in Malabar and in Travancore, magicians and sorcerers, from the highest Nambuthiri to the lowest Parayan, find employment in exorcising their baneful influences. Among the Pánans, Mannáns and Parayans, magic, sorcery, and witchcraft are a hereditary profession, and among the Nambuthiripáds of Kallúr, Káttumatam, and Chennamangalam are to be found special family deities by whose aid they are supposed to avert the actions of demons and spirits. It is curious to note that there are exorcists even among Christians and Mussalmans; and another interesting fact in connection with this is that the high caste Hindus exercise their magic influence by propitiating, by the aid of their sacred *mantrams*, the more refined and sublime manifestations of God, while the low caste-men propitiate Káli in her more hideous aspects. The ordinary people make a distinction between *Bhútas* on the one hand, and *Prétas* and *Pisáchas* on the other. The former are regarded as the messenger of Siva and his consort Sakti, while the latter are the souls of the departed who have died a violent and unnatural death by suicide, murder, or by drowning, and they are believed to be demons who wander about inflicting injury upon mankind in various ways. At noon and at midnight are the chief hours when they attempt to seize or possess those who walk in lonely places or take shelter under tamarind trees or on the sides of tanks. At night the demons are believed to call loudly in order to allure people out of their homes into distant jungles and there to kill them; hence, as a rule, at night a call is not responded to until it is repeated a fourth

1. Vide Religion of the Ishuvans, Vol. I, page 313.

time. At the period of puberty and after child-birth women are especially liable to the attacks of these aërial beings. Charms and incantations, offerings and sacrifices, are the most requisite to counteract the evils that demons do, and iron rings, iron staffs, and leather shoes, are some of the specifics that help to keep the demons at a distance.

They make their abode chiefly in the palmyra and *pála* trees, but some of them occupy even dwelling houses. Others take the shape of human beings, while yet others possess human beings.

Their name is legion, and they exist by the offerings of their votaries and their tormented victims. Against the machinations of these demons, the sorcerers and exorcists bring to bear the influence of their special guardian deities who in turn must be propitiated with offerings before they can be called upon to use their beneficial strength. In the case of the evil spirit of him who has died an unnatural death, a Brahman magician purifies the spirit by means of certain ceremonies called *Tilahóma* (an offering of sesamum seeds to *agni* or fire). A Chendus Nambuthiri presides at such ceremonies and transfers the spirit to an image of gold, silver, or wood which is afterwards placed in a Vishnu temple or enshrined in a small building put up for that purpose, there to rest in peace.

In the State, temples are dedicated to various demons, the chief among them being the *Avanangáttil Cháttan* in *Tripayar*. The temples dedicated to the small-pox demon correspond to the *Péy Kóvils* or devil temples of the Tamil Districts. In these temples are to be found the instruments and symbols of demon worship, the dancing sticks or wands, the priests' garments, tridents, etc., whilst in others there is nothing save the images of demons. There is also an officiating priest, who is the devil driver and the devil dancer, and who at times even becomes a *Velichápád* inspired to communicate to the votaries, who consult him in times of illness and calamity, the wishes and intentions of that particular demon.

To a Hindu all organic life is sacred, and his creed is not to injure any living thing, while among the animals worshipped by him the cow occupies the first place. The cow is *Kámadhénu*, the giver of all things, and hence whenever a cow is approached, it is touched

Worship of animals
and plants.

with the hand which is, in token of veneration, then raised to the head. Milk, curd, ghee, urine and dung are mixed together and used for purificatory ceremonies; and the images of gods are anointed with this holy mixture called *panchagavyam*. Small doses of it are even taken internally, and it is considered an antidote against poison, besides being prescribed as a *prdyaschit* or expiation for offences against caste, whereas the sprinkling of water mixed with dung removes sin or pollution from all persons, places, or things, and purifies them. The bull, the vehicle of Siva, is also held sacred, and a statue of it in granite is either placed in front of the image of Siva or in a separate shrine, and is worshipped as a God. The lizard associated with Siva, the monkey with Hanumán, the Garuda (the brahmany kite) with Vishnu, and the peacock of Subramania are a few of the other animals of Hindu veneration.

Of the birds of ill omen, one species of owl called *pullu* is much dreaded because of the belief that it causes an illness to children which results in emaciation. At the sound of its screeching, children are taken into a room to avoid its injurious gaze. Various are the propitiatory ceremonies performed by specialists to secure its good-will and to prevent its doing harm to babies; and amulets are worn by children as a preventive against its evil influences. Its hideous screeches are always associated with death.

Among trees, some are worshipped while others are used for *pújas* or sacrifices. Among the former may be mentioned the pipal (*Ficus religiosa*), a tree which is held in veneration by the Hindus. Persons afflicted with maladies or whose planets are unfavourable, go round a pipal tree, seven, twelve, forty-one, or one hundred and eight times, muttering prayers and burning camphor and other incense at its foot or perchance engage Brahmans to do so, in the belief, that it will cure disease or counteract evil influences. The *vilva* (*Ægle marmelos*), whose leaf of triple form is supposed to represent the three eyes of Siva, and symbolise his triple function of production, destruction, and re-production, and the *tulsi* (*Ocimum sanctum*), which is sacred to Vishnu, are also worshipped. In front of every house, generally on the eastern side, or in the central yard of a quadrangular structure, is a stone or mud altar, on which *tulsi* or the *vilva* is planted and watered every day, and is worshipped by the inmates of the house. From

the *tulsi* are also made rosaries, which, in addition to being an aid to prayers, are also used as ornaments for the neck. Among the trees used for *pújas* or sacrifices are the sandal-wood, the *plásu* (*Butea frondosa*), the *rudriksham* (*Elæocarpus lanceolatus*), the *darbha* (*Poa cynosuroides*), the *karuka* (*Agrostis linearis*), the *thumba* (*Leucas Indica*), *chembarutti* (shoeflower, *Hibiscus Rosa sinensis*), *erikku* (*Calotropis gigantea*), *thechi* (*Chrysanthemum*), and the several species of lotus and jessamine; and of these one and all are extensively used for medicinal purposes.

The belief in demons and the habit of attributing all that cannot be easily accounted for to supernatural powers, have built up an edifice of folk-tales that would prove of great interest to students of folk-lore, some of which are given below:—

Folk tales.

The eclipse is ascribed to the devouring of the sun or moon by the huge serpent *Ráhu*, and while it lasts, a kind of pollution is observed by the people, for during the period of eclipse, food and drink are supposed to acquire poisonous properties.

People who hear stories of *Rámáyana*, while lying on their beds, will become blades of grass in their next birth.

Will-o'-the-wisps are accounted for, as lights emitted by a kind of precious stone (*mánikka kallu*) from the mouths of serpents, which, owing to their long life, are believed to have acquired the art of flying. Popular belief is that some serpents have been blowing for ages upon gold, embedded in the strata of the earth, and converting it into precious stones of the nature above mentioned. They keep them in their mouths, and acquire the power of flying in the air, with the stones shining brilliantly when they open their mouths.

When the crow and the fowl were first created, they were asked which they preferred, personal beauty or long life. The fowl preferred the former, and the crow the latter. Hence it is that the crow is said to possess a long lease of life.

The crow is supposed to possess only one eye, though apparently it has two. One eye-ball is said to move first in one socket, then into the other as necessity requires. The story is connected with a strange myth.

During the exile of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, they lived chiefly by hunting. One day, when Sita was drying some pieces of flesh, a crow accidentally pecked at one of Sita's ruddy toes, taking it for one of the blood red pieces of meat. She thereupon told her husband about it, who shot an arrow at the crow and blinded it in one eye, and thenceforth its descendants have been blind in one eye.

When the great Rama was constructing the dam across the sea, for his large army to cross over to Lanka (Ceylon) to wage war with the *Asura*, Ravana, and to recover his wife Sita, a small squirrel was found working hard without food. This attracted the notice of the great Rama who took pity on him and gently rubbed him on the back with three fingers as a sign of affection, and the impressions thus left became the black and white lines, which the whole species possessed thereafter.

Ari-právu or the common house-dove has a story told of it. These birds, male and female, are always found in pairs together. Once, it is said, they were quarrelling about a game, and the quarrel ended in the desertion by the male bird of his mate, who recognizing the mistake called for him, and her cries are said to be ever calling out for her mate.

Rain, Thunder and Lightning:—In the aerial regions are huge monsters of extraordinary strength (*Kālaméghattanmár*) who are supposed to possess two horns with the aid of which all the water from the earth is drawn up during the summer, to be spat out in the rainy season at Indra's (Rain God's) bidding. Lightning is caused by the friction of the horns, while engaged in the task of spitting out water. Another version of the story as to the origin of lightning is, that it is caused by the brandishing of Indra's sword, while engaged in ordering the monsters to supply the earth with water.

It is said that a new lobe grows on to the liver of a tiger every year it lives, and therefore by an examination of that organ, the age of the animal can be accurately determined.

Evil spirits are believed to have the power at times of changing men into tigers, such being distinguished by having no tails.

The claws and even the teeth of the tiger are used as charms against witchcraft and the evil-eye. They may frequently be seen set in silver, and worn round the necks of

children. Tiger's whiskers have also the same efficacy against demoniacal influence. The flesh is eaten as medicine, while the skin boiled in gingelly oil and strained into the ear, removes deafness.

There is a common belief that, should the nest of a brahmany kite be found, and one of the young ones be attached to it by a string, the squall breaks away, generally leaving a portion of the line attached to the nest as it becomes strong. The nest which is formed of sticks should then be thrown into a running stream, when, if any of the sticks that compose it float against the current, they will, on being applied to any fetters, cause them immediately to fly into a thousand fragments.

The owl which is an emblem of wisdom in Europe, and the goose that of stupidity, completely change their respective places in the east, the former becoming a symbol of stupidity, the latter that of wisdom.

The hooting of the owl heard at night, has, in all parts of the world and in all ages, been considered ominous of evil, and is consequently much dreaded. In Cochin, it is generally believed, that the hooting of an owl betokens an impending calamity or even the death of an individual near whose abode its loathsome cry is heard; and so, dwellers in the neighbouring houses at once turn out and drive it away.

Jack-o'-lantern:—These are called *Kollykattu Pisúchus* (ghosts which emit fire from their mouths), and make their appearance on the side of tanks, rivers, and marshy places during rainy or foggy nights. They fly away or disappear at the sight of men and are much dreaded by the people.

Preëminent among the trees in the town of Cochin, and towering above all others along the sea-shore and sides of the back-water are the cocoanut palms (*cocos nucifera* linn), every portion of which, from the leaves to the roots, may be turned to some useful purpose.

There is a tradition that the Raja of Benares, who was a strenuous worshipper of one supreme God, and rejected the custom of making offerings to inferior divinities, became, in course of time, almost equal to the Gods, and created many of the grains now in common use. As his powers increased, so did his ambition, and he meditated creating another species of human beings very superior to anything then existing in the world. But after he had completed its head, the demi-gods became alarmed and

prevailed on him to cease his work. The head was therefore transformed into a cocoanut which was henceforth to be one of the most useful of all trees in the vegetable kingdom, and was dedicated to Ganésa, the patron of science and learning.

The Nayars generally burn their dead bodies, while those of children under two or three years of age as well as those of persons who have died of small-pox or cholera are buried. When a Nayar is at the point of death, the members of the house-hold and friends who may be present, one by one, pour into his mouth a few drops of Ganges or other holy water or *kanji* water, from a tiny cup made of a leaf or two of the *tulsi* plant. While doing this, they hold in the hand a piece of gold or a gold ring and the water is supposed to touch the gold, before it enters the mouth of the dying person. Sometimes, a *fanam* or gold piece is placed in the mouth, and the lips are closed.

As soon as death has taken place, the corpse is removed from the cot or bed and carried to the *vadakkini*, a room at the northern end of the house, where it is placed on long plantain leaves spread out on the floor, and while it is there, a lamp is kept burning both day and night. One member of the family holds the head in his lap, while another the feet in the same way, and here it is that the neighbours come to have a last look at the dead. All the while, the names of gods or sacred texts are loudly recited in the hope that the soul may quit the world with recollections of God which would serve as a passport to Heaven. Immediately death occurs, the members of the house and the relatives assembled there burst out into loud lamentations, announcing the sad event to the caste-men of the village who attend at once. When preparations for the funeral have been made, the dead body is carried to the *nadumittam* or central yard of the house, or if there is no central yard, to the front yard where it is again laid on plantain leaves. It is then washed, anointed and neatly clothed, and the usual marks of sandal-wood paste and ashes, as in life, are made. The senior member of the deceased's family along with others including the sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, and all the relatives, place new cotton cloths over the dead, and these are used for tying up the corpse before being taken to the cremation ground. Before removal, another ceremony called *Para Nirakkuka* (filling up *para*, a measure thrice the size of a gallon).

is performed. All the members of the family take part in this ceremony under the direction of the priest who belongs to the *Athikurussi* class. The ceremony consists in filling up three *para* measures with paddy and one *edangali* of raw rice, and placing them near the corpse together with a burning lamp of local manufacture.

A mango tree is cut, and as much fuel as is necessary for the burning of the dead is collected and placed at the south-eastern corner of the compound which is always set apart for the burning or burial of the dead. A small pit about the size of the dead body is dug. Across this are placed three long stumps of the plantain tree, one at each end and one in the middle, and on these the foundation of the pyre is laid. The dead body which is placed on a bamboo bier is carried to the cremation ground and placed on the pyre with its head to the south, then fuel is laid over it, together with a little camphor, sandal-wood and ghee, if the family can afford the expense. Before the body is placed on the pyre, the *anandaravan*, the member of the family immediately junior to the deceased, tears from the new cloths laid on the corpse, a piece sufficient to go round his own loins. He wears it round his waist and holds in his hand or tucks into his cloth at the waist, a piece of iron, generally a long key. It must be noted here, that all those members of the family who are older than the deceased may not take any part whatsoever in the funeral ceremony or in any subsequent ceremony after the cremation or burial, but all adult males junior to the deceased should be present when the pyre is lighted. The deceased's younger brother, or in his absence, his nephew (sister's son), sets fire to the pyre beginning at the head of the corpse; but if a son is left by the deceased, he sets fire to the pyre beginning at the feet. In the case of a woman, the son has to set fire to the pyre, or in his absence, one junior in age to her has the right to do so. It is a matter of great importance that the whole pyre should burn at once, and great care towards that end is taken. While the corpse is being consumed, all the members of the family go and bathe in a tank (there is always one in the compound of a Nayar house). The eldest man who has the piece of cloth and the key carries a pot of water, and all return to the place of cremation. When the body is almost consumed by fire, the senior member carries the pot of water thrice round it, letting

the water leak out by making holes in the pot as he walks round. On completing the third round he dashes the pot on the ground close to the spot where the head of the dead had been placed. This circling round (*Kumbhāpradakshinam*) is said to symbolize that the deceased has had his ablution in the water of the Ganges. Then the chief mourner and others bathe in a tank or river, perform an ablution of water (*Udaka-kriya*) to a piece of *karuka* grass stuck up to represent the spirit of the dead. A small image of the deceased is then made out of raw rice, and to this image a few grains of rice and gingelly seed are offered. When this has been done, the relatives and the neighbours who have been there depart, taking care to bathe themselves before entering their houses.

The ceremony next in importance is the *Séshakriya* (making offerings to the deceased's spirit) which begins on the second day after death and continues for seven days, the particulars of which are as follows:—All the male members of the family, junior to the deceased, bathe and return home. The eldest of them who has the torn cloth and the piece of iron, together with the others, assemble in the central court-yard of the house, where there has been prepared by their *enangan* Chithayan, some boiled rice, a few gingelly seeds, a few leaves of the *cherula*, some curd, and a small measure of paddy, rice, and turmeric. All these are placed in the north-east corner with a lamp locally made. A piece of palmyra leaf, about a foot or so in length and the width of a finger is taken, one end after being knotted, is placed in the ground, and the long end is left sticking up. This leaf represents the deceased, and the rice and other things are offered to it. The following is the belief concerning the use of the palmyra leaf:—There are in the human body ten humours, *Váyus*, *Prāṇan*, *Apāṇan*, *Sa-māṇan*, *Udāṇan*, *Vyāṇan*, *Nāgan*, *Kūrman*, *Krikalan*, *Dēva-dathan* and *Dhananjayan*. There are *Desavayus* or ten airs. When cremation was performed for the first time, all excepting the last were consumed in the fire, while the last flew up and settled on a palmyra leaf. This was discovered by some Brahman sages, who by means of *mantrams* forced it into the palmyra leaf. So it is thought that by making offerings to this leaf for seven days, the spirit of the deceased will be pacified.

The place where the leaf is to be fixed is first cleaned carefully, and the leaf is then placed in the centre of the prepared

surface. The men, when they return from their baths, bring with them some harialli grass (*karukapullu*); and making an obeisance with the right knee on the ground, they spread some grass near the strip of palmyra leaf, and rings made of the leaf are also worn by all those present. The eldest of the *anandaravans* or nephew then makes offerings of water, turmeric and leaves of the *cherula*, as well as balls of boiled rice with a few gingelly grains and curds poured over it. As boys are forbidden to make the offerings, should the nephew chance to be a boy, it is considered sufficient for him to touch one of the elders who, under those circumstances, makes the offerings. The whole is then covered with a plantain leaf, a lighted wick is waved near it, and some milk is poured under the leaf. This is left undisturbed for some seconds, after which the leaf is tapped gently with the back of the fingers of the right hand; it is then removed and torn in two at its mid-rib, one piece being placed on either side of the *pindams*. And now the ceremony is over for the day. The agnates rise and remove their wet clothing, sometimes even bathe again. The torn cloth is tied round a pillar near the basket covering the leaf, and the leaf is uncovered every day for seven days at the same hour for the performance of the ceremony. At the end of each day's ceremony the offerings of rice balls left are unguarded for a short time to allow the crows to feed on them; after which they are removed by the female members of the *tarawád*, who are junior to the deceased, and the eldest of them carries the offerings to the side of a tank and throws them into the water. It is believed that if the crows take them, the spirit is pleased. Should the crows leave any remains, they must be thrown into the water, as dogs must not eat the offerings.


During the seven days the house of the deceased and all its inmates are considered to be under pollution, and the members of that *tarawád* may not go to any other house nor can members of other *tarawáds* visit them without polluting themselves; but this pollution can be removed by bathing. During this period, however, as a rule, the *káranavan* of the family receives visits of condolence from relatives and friends to whom he is at home on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Here it must be said, that in some cases, the visitors bring with them small presents in money or in kind to help the *káranavan* with the expenditure to which the funeral rites put him.

On the third day after the death, all those who are related to the *tarawád* by matrimonial alliances combine and give a feast to the inmates of the house and to the neighbours. This is called the *Patni kanji*. On the seventh day a return feast is given by the members of the *tarawád*, to all relations and neighbours. Between the seventh and the fourteenth day after death, no ceremonies are performed, but the members of the family are under pollution, and then on the fourteenth day comes the *Sanchayanam*. It is the disposal of the calcined remains, the ashes of the deceased. The male members of the *tarawád* go to the place of cremation, and picking up the unburnt bones of the deceased, place them in an earthen pot which is sun-dried—not burnt in the usual way—and cover up the mouth of the pot with a piece of cloth. The eldest carries it and, followed by the rest, proceeds to the nearest river (it must be a running stream) into which it is thrown. In some places the bones are collected on the seventh and preserved in a pot which, when convenient, is carried to Benares, Rameswaram, Gaya, or to Thirunelly in Wynad and there deposited as above described. Such a disposal is called *Ashtagaya-Sradham*, and puts an end to the need of all earthly ceremonies—nor is there any need to continue the annual ceremony for that person. The belief is that the collection and careful disposal of the ashes of the dead gives peace to the departed spirit, which will not thereafter injure the living members of the *tarawád*.

On the fifteenth day is the purificatory ceremony at which a man of the *Attikurissi* clan officiates as priest. In the morning the members of the family wear cloths washed by a *Vélan* (washerman) and assemble together for purification by the Nayar priest who throws on them, both before and after bathing, paddy, rice, gingelly seeds, and the holy mixture (milk, oil, etc.). The Elayad or the Brahman priest performs the *Punydharm* or purification of the house, well, etc., and on the sixteenth day he takes the place of the priest. On the evening of the fifteenth day and the morning of the sixteenth, the priests and the villagers are sumptuously fed, and presents of cloth are made to the latter and money to the former. In the Chittur Taluk, the priestly functions are sometimes performed by the Elayad, and *Deeksha* (leaving the body unshaved for forty-one days or a year) is observed by the nephew and the son of the deceased. The one who is under this mark of mourning makes offerings of rice balls

and gingelly seeds every morning after his bath to the departed spirit, and he must abstain from women, meat, alcoholic drinks, and from chewing betel and tobacco. When the *Deeksha* is observed, the ashes of the dead are not deposited as described above until the last day of *Deeksha*, the forty-first or the 365th day after death. When *Deeksha* is observed for a year, the ceremony called *bali* is performed every day. The last day of *Deeksha* is one of festivity, and after *bali*, the man under *Deeksha* is shaved. Then at the end of every year, the annual *Sradha* or the commemorative rite is performed for the deceased. Rice ball offerings are made and given to the crows, when clapping of hands announces to these birds that the rice is being thrown for them, and should they come and eat it, it is considered that the spirit of the deceased is pleased with the offering and is not likely to be troublesome. But, on the other hand, should they not come and eat it, it is evident that the spirit is displeased and the *tarawád* had better be on the look out. In the case of those who have committed suicide or met death by violent means, the spirits are always particularly vicious and troublesome to the *tarawád*, invariably rendering miserable some unfortunate member of it. Unless the spirits are pacified, they will ruin the family, so a Brahman priest is invited to satisfy them by means of *Tilahómam*, a rite in which sacrificial fire is raised, and ghee and gingelly seeds are among the offerings.



CHAPTER V.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

A. THE HIGH CASTE SUDRAS (NAYARS)

(Continued).

Among the high caste Nayers, the recognition of caste by occupation is not possible. They were at one time a military caste, and as a relic of it, the small force of infantry maintained by the State is still known by the name of the ancient military caste of Kerala. Aristocratic military leaders of the feudal ages, who then derived their incomes chiefly from landed property, in these times of uninterrupted peace and tranquillity, are but shadows of their former state. Some of them are almost penniless, and while a few families maintain their ancient position, most of them have lost prestige and influence. Among the lower classes of Nayers, there are sub-castes who by occupation were potters, weavers, oil-mongers, and copper-smiths; but the men of these sub-castes have abandoned their traditional occupations, and even consider it a disgrace to be known by their original occupation. This is partly due to the acquisition of wealth by a number of the caste-men, and partly to their attempts to rise in the social scale by engaging themselves in other walks of life. There are again some classes (*Illakkárs* or *Sudras*) of Nayers who rendered personal services to the Nambuthiris or to their own community, and the tendency has been to discontinue the services and take to other more respectable calling.

The Nayers numbered 1,11,837 at the last Census, and of these, 28,786 are agriculturists. These include tenant farmers, agricultural labourers, growers of special products and those connected with agricultural training and forests. Very few take to manufacture and trade. The sentiments generated by the old feudalism, a rigid conservatism of caste and their residence in rural areas account for it to a great extent.

The Nayers are the second in the list of the castes as regards learning, and only five per cent. of the population belong to the learned professions, but they are found in all departments of public service. The community is now availing itself largely of the benefits of modern education, and the members are fast becoming conspicuous in every walk of life. In every department of the State, in all the learned professions, they form a respectable majority, and the only people who successfully compete with them are the Brahman immigrants from the other coast. Though there are extensive landholders and substantial farmers among them, a very large majority of the caste-men are really very poor, being either petty farmers, agricultural labourers or day labourers, earning wages at the rate of four to five annas a day. Even women of the poorer classes do agricultural work. Domestic servants in Hindu families are almost wholly Nayers, but none of them are artisans, weavers or potters.

The Nayers seldom eat before their bath or before worshipping in the temple close at hand. Their meals are generally three in number, namely, breakfast which is taken early in the morning, a midday meal between eleven and twelve, and another between seven and eight in the evening, but this meal is generally taken by children between five and six. The breakfast usually consists of *kanji* or rice gruel with some pickles and *pappadam* (round wafers made of the meal of the kidney-bean). Coffee is becoming popular among the Nayers, and this beverage is now often taken for breakfast in well-to-do families. They do not recognize any danger in the use of it, and individuals of all ages indulge in it, so much so that it is even given to young infants. The midday meal, which is usually served between eleven and twelve o'clock, consists of boiled rice together with a few vegetable curries; and butter-milk mixed with rice is the last course.

Their supper which usually consists of similar preparation is taken between seven and eight at night. The women take their food after the male members of the family. Only a minority of Nayers are strict vegetarians, though there is no prohibition against their eating meat, fish or fowl.

In large aristocratic families, Brahman cooks are engaged to prepare the meals, but the serving is in some cases done by the members. In other families, on the contrary, the cooks of



NAVAR WOMEN THRESHING CORN.

the caste or the grown-up women cook and serve the food to the inmates who sit in the dining hall with their own dishes or with plantain leaves placed before them. In ordinary and poor families the cooking and serving are done by women alone.

In grand festivities in which food is served to a large number of the caste-men, the preparations are similar to those served at Brahman feasts, a full account of which will be given when I deal with them.

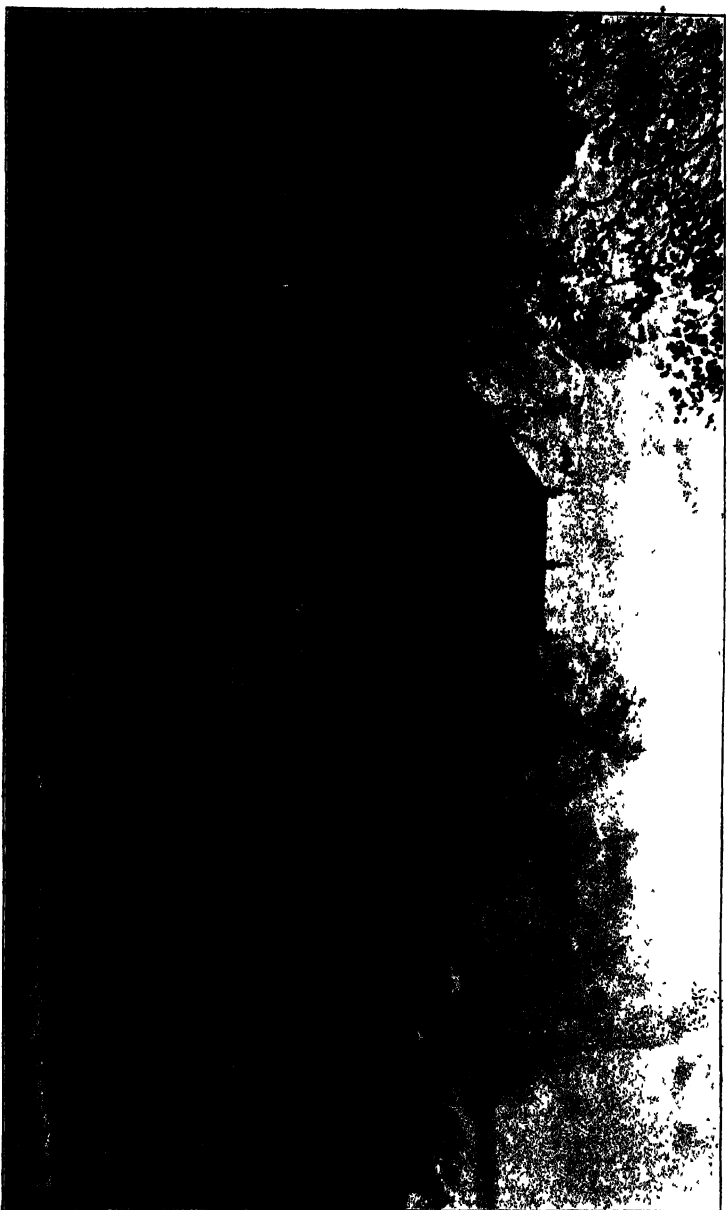
The Nayers rank below the Ambalavásis and above the polluting castes. Even among themselves there are various grades of social precedence, and the members of higher sub-castes do not freely mingle with those of the lower. Men of the higher sub-castes may sometimes eat with those of the lower, but their women never take their meals with those lower to them in the social scale. It is curious to note that in grand feasts and on ceremonial occasions, good many formalities have to be observed in the allocation of seats in the dining hall for guests according to their social status, and any violation of the caste rules or etiquette will end in their abruptly leaving the hall. The touch of the Nayar pollutes the Brahmans, and they themselves in turn are polluted by the touch of the low caste Sudras. The consumption of meat does not entail loss of caste, though many abstain from eating it. They may take or drink water from the wells belonging either to their own caste or the three castes above them. Elayathús are their priests, but sometimes their caste-men also officiate as such, and Nambuthiris give *punnyáham* (holy water) to the Nayers under pollution. Being in close contact with the Brahmans, they learn to conduct themselves as the Brahmans do, and their morning and evening baths and their worship in temples are as punctual as those of the priestly class.

Clothing is of considerable hygienic importance in the life of a nation, and hygiene plays a considerable part in the dress of a Nayar. A piece of cloth, two to two-and-a-half yards long and one-and-a-half yards broad, is worn round the loins. It must touch the ground or very nearly so, and this method of wearing the cloth gives a simplicity and dignity most suitable to their classic features. A small upper garment is also worn while at home. A Nayar always carries an umbrella while walking in the sun, but there

is no covering for the head. This forms the costume of a large majority of them. On special occasions or when he goes to public places, he has the same loin cloth, while a richer cloth (*pāvu mundu*), somewhat longer and broader, is worn over the upper part of the body. As has already been said, Nayars are to be found in all grades of public service, and these as well as others wear a kind of a neat loin cloth, with a shirt and coat together with a turban to cover the head, while others more fashionable appear in European costume with turbans instead of hats; others again wear hats as well, but their number is few. Among the poorer classes, the loin cloth is not larger than a yard-and-a-half or two by three-fourth of a yard.

The men shave their faces and bodies clean, leaving an oval patch of hair on the top of the head, while some grow it over a large surface of the head. In both cases, care is taken to keep the tufts sufficiently long, smooth and oily, and this adds considerably to their neat and handsome appearance; but it is becoming the fashion to crop the hair and to dress it in the fashion of the Europeans.

The Nayar women wear an inner garment round the loins and this is covered by an outer garment which is usually two-and-a-half yards in length and one-and-a-half yards in breadth. Sometimes, instead of two cloths, one cloth sufficiently long for the purpose is worn. The dress is white, and sufficiently decent to cover the lower part of the body, and a small upper cloth serves as a covering above the waist. The Nayar women of the present day wear petticoats and cover the upper part of their body with a piece of cloth. It is curious to notice that this form of dress does not find favour (in the rural parts) with the Nambuthiris who are either their landlords or to whom they owe some kind of allegiance or subordination. The absence of any covering for the bosom in ordinary female dress has drawn much ridicule on the Nayars, and this custom has been much misunderstood by foreigners. So far from indicating immodesty, it is looked upon by the people themselves in exactly the opposite light, for among them prostitutes only cover the breasts. "A custom has in it nothing indecent when it is universal," as one of the travellers philosophically remarks (Dall). It is, in fact, a mark of disrespect to one's own elders and betters for either a male or female of the Nayar caste, and of all castes



KUTTAMBALAM.

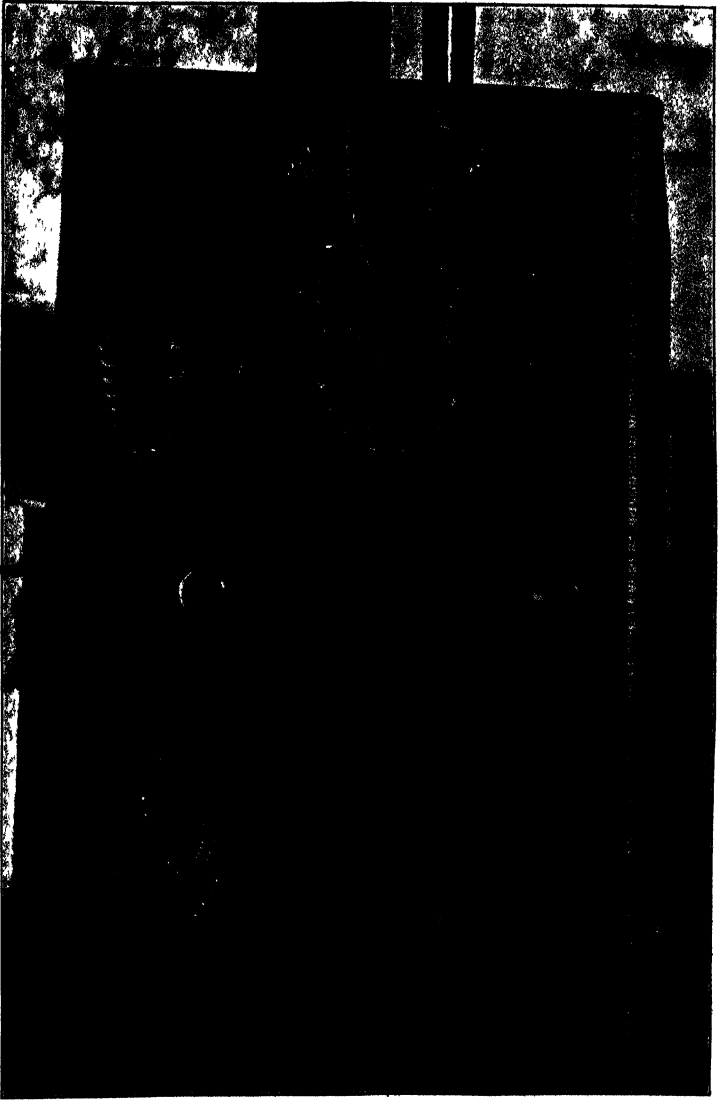
below it, to cover the upper part of the body, and traces of the same custom can still be found among other Dravidian tribes, some of them being people who are anything but uncivilized. The prohibition applies both to males and females. Men moreover cannot wear caps, turbans or shoes, and must divest themselves of these luxuries, when they meet their elders, even though the meeting takes place in the middle of the road. Until 1865, it was forbidden by law for women of the Chóvans and of those of the lower castes to wear any clothing above the loins. The present generation of Nayar women, except perhaps the servants and the poor, have taken to the use of an upper garment and petticoat, in the same way as the Nayar males now freely use a second cloth. Young girls wear a piece of cloth round the loins, while those of four and five years of age wear a small strip of cloth, or a piece of the bark of areca palm. Generally young children of both sexes go about naked.

The subject of hair-dressing and personal adornment is more psychological and ethnological than hygienic. The Nayar women take special care in the growth and preservation of their hair. They use a kind of medicinal oil to improve its growth, and to keep it smooth and shiny. Many a young woman's plait of hair reaches the knee or even lower, and this adds greatly to her beauty. The hair is parted in the middle and tied either tight to the ears or twisted up in front in a sort of cone or sometimes tied into a knot behind.

The Nayar women are fond of jewellery. They are no doubt partial to gold, but unlike their Brahman sisters they wear very few ornaments for daily use. The oldest ornament of the Nayar lady is the *nága-patam* or serpent's hood, so called from the shape of the pendant. The ear-ornament is the *thóda*, which is a double convex disc, the front surface of which is either plain or set with rubies, for the wearing of which the ear-lobes are sufficiently dilated. This dilating process begins at a very early age, and the ear-lobes, in the case of a majority of the women, become so far distended as to make it possible to wear *thódas* of more than an inch in diameter. The tendency at present is to wear small ones which do not require much dilation. Then come the ornaments for the nose which are *múkkuthi* and *námmu*. These do not find favour with the young women of these days, and what is called the nose-screw set with a ruby has taken their place.

There are various ornaments for the neck, of which the one called *addiyal* is the commonest. Other ornaments for the neck are the so-called *yanthram*, *poothali*, *avil mda* and *pulinakham*. The latter is worn by children, and *pálikka-móthiram* is the ornament which is worn by maidens. Gold and silver belts are worn round the loins. Grown-up women do not wear anklets, while the younger ones use *káppu* and *golusu*. Rings of all kinds are worn on the fingers.





OLD ORNAMENTS OF NAYAR LADIES.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUDRAS OF COCHIN.

B. THE LOW CASTE SUDRAS.

Next in social status to the high caste Nayars, come the low caste Sudras, who are also included in the time-honoured division of the Malayali Sudras. The term 'low caste Sudras' includes the three minor castes or sub-castes, namely, *Velakkathalavan*, *Veluthédan* and *Cháliyan*; the two similar castes, *Kadupattan* and *Tharakan*, are omitted in the list of the purely Malayali castes of the State. Again, in the last Imperial Census Report, the *Velakkathalavan* and *Veluthédan* alone are classed as low caste Sudras, while the other two are Tamil castes which are becoming Malayaliased. Instances of a similar process of assimilation which has been and is still going on among some of the Tamil castes in the Chittur Taluk of the State have come under my notice in the course of my investigations there. It is also curious to note that no place or status is assigned to the *Kadupattans* in any of the old Malayalam works dealing with castes, owing perhaps to the fact of their not having been brought to Kerala by Parasurama for some special occupation. They were classed among the low caste Sudras of Malabar, and only a corresponding status is given to them in the State. They are a large community striving to rise higher in the social scale, and I therefore propose to treat them as first among the low caste Sudras.

THE KADUPATTANS.

They are a community peculiar to this coast and popularly supposed to be the descendants of degraded *Pattar* Brahmans. The origin of the caste is somewhat obscure, but the following story, as to their origin, is told by a few educated members of the caste.

The word 'Kadupattan' is another form of 'Kadur Bhattan' or Kadur Brahmans, *i. e.*, the Brahmans of the Kadur village in the Chola kingdom. The tradition is that they were the Brahmans of the said village who favoured the introduction of Buddhism, and were on that account banished from the country. They went to Kerala and sought the protection of the then Zamorin of Calicut, who allowed them to settle in his territory, from which they gradually spread themselves to the other Taluks of South Malabar, and to the northern Taluks of the Cochin State. They were not admitted into the Brahman society of Malabar, but were distinguished from other caste-men by the special name of Kadur Bhattans or Kadupattans. It is also said that, after their settlement in Kerala, they met the great religious reformer and philosopher, Sri Sankara Chariar, who, out of pity for them, directed them to teach the Sudras and other low caste-men, and blessed the members of some of their families with instructions on Sakti worship, whose descendants even now profess to be experts in its performance and claim it as an inheritance from their forefathers. The date of their arrival in Kerala is commemorated by the astrological formula, "*Kaduka thyaktha sthēya*," which means that their settlement in the new country was after 16,70,342 days from the commencement of *Kaliyuga*, *i. e.*, in the year 625 of the Malayalam era. Thus, they have been in the land of their adoption for the last 450 years.¹

Dr. Gundert considers the word to be a compound of 'Kadu' and 'Pattan', a Pattar Brahman degraded on account of eating fish. In the Sirkar accounts they are called 'Choulam', *i. e.*, those who belonged to Chola country. *Pattanam Pizhathavar*, or those who have lost their status, is another name by which they are known to other caste-men.

Ezhuthachan (teacher) is a title originally given to the educated members of their caste by the senior lady of the Zamorin's family and other chieftains who authorised them to teach the low caste people. This points to their having been largely employed as village school-masters for a time. Even now this title is conferred on them

1. The account appears to have been cooked up to prove their Brahmanical pretensions. If they had come to Kerala some 450 years ago, they could not have met Sri Sankara Chariar who lived more than 1,000 years ago. There is also another account that, about 2,000 years ago, they were expelled from the Chola country before the said religious reformer was born.



GROUP OF KADUPATTANS.

by the rulers and chieftains on payment of some *thirmulkashcha* (nuzzer). Panikkar is another title possessed by some. The caste-men below them address the male members as Pattarappan, and their women as Pattathiar or Pattathiar Amma.

There are two main sub-divisions in this caste: (1) Kara-
Sub-divisions of the caste. purathukár (those inhabiting the sea-coast), and (2) Muppathirandukár (members of the thirty-two families occupying the interior). There is no inter-marriage between the members of the two sub-divisions, but no objection is taken to members of one party taking meals along with others in the same house. There is also another minor division called Ponathies, the members of which are the descendants of the people who were originally out-casted for some violation of caste rules.

The Kadupattans are found in all parts of the northern
Habitations. Taluks of the State. The houses of the wealthy are similar to those of the Nayers; but the caste-men are generally poor, and therefore live in small thatched houses, made of mud walls and bamboo framework with a room or two, a kitchen at one end and a verandah in front. They were, in former times, forbidden to build substantial houses, to have gates, or use gold ornaments, but all such restrictions have now disappeared.

Among relations, a young man may marry the daughter of
Marriage prohibitions. his maternal uncle or paternal aunt. All other matrimonial alliances among relatives are strictly prohibited.

Among the Kadupattans, the girls are generally married
Marriage customs both before and after puberty; but in cases where suitable husbands are not procurable, what is called *Veettu kettu* is performed before maturity. It is only a *tali*-tying by the mother. In no case is a girl allowed to remain without a *táli* or marriage badge until she becomes of age. Should such a case occur, the fact that the girl has attained puberty is concealed; but such instances are very rare.

When a girl attains puberty, she is put into a separate
Puberty customs. room during the three days of pollution, when she is fed with very nourishing meals, and directed to lie in a blanket during the night. The fourth day is one of festivity to friends and relations. The husband has to provide her with two pieces of cloth. The relatives who

attend the feast bring fruits, bread and sweetmeats. On the morning of the fourth day, the girl is led out in procession to the tank for a bath, when her *enangan* prepares a *bali* or sacrifice (pieces of the green bark of a plantain tree arranged in a triangular form with small torches stuck into it). As the girl wearing the *mattu* (half washed cloth supplied by the washer-woman) sinks under water to be freed from pollution, the *enangan* passes the *bali* above water, believing that any demon, she may be possessed of, will then leave her. After her bath, she is neatly dressed and bedecked with ornaments. She then returns home in procession, after which her girl friends and the caste women who accompanied her are served with a kind of bread (*theratividu*). This is followed by a feast to the guests who have been invited.

Marriage customs
(continued)

In general, the marriageable age for girls is between ten and twelve, and that for boys between sixteen and twenty-one. But this is often exceeded. After the examination of the horoscopes of the young man and the girl whom it is proposed he should marry, the parents of the latter are consulted in the event of an agreement between the horoscopes. If they approve of the match, a special day is selected, when certain formalities leading to the negotiation and settlement for the wedding are gone through. This is called *Parannun* or *Achāra Kalyānam*. On the day selected, the bridegroom's party, with the *enangan*, goes to the bride's house where the caste-men of the village, together with her *enangan*, are assembled. A *pūja* to Ganapati is then performed, after which the bride's father makes a solemn promise in the presence of the assembled guests to give his daughter in marriage to the said young man. Then the parties assembled are treated to a feast, and a present of a pair of cloths is also made to the bride. Among the members of the thirty-two families, the worship of Ganapati as well as the present to the bride is dispensed with. A formal declaration is made when the parties are assembled for dinner; and invitations are sent out by both parties to their friends and relations to attend the wedding on a fixed day.

On the morning of the day fixed for the celebration of the wedding, the bridegroom, neatly dressed, and well bedecked after a bath, sets out with his own party and the *enangan* for a house near that of the bride's. Here they are received with

due ceremony by the bride's party, and after the partaking of food (*Ayal Oonu*) together, they proceed to the house of the bride, where, at the gate, a woman welcomes the bridegroom with a lighted lamp and a vessel full of *guruthi* (water mixed with chunam and turmeric powder). The latter is waved round his face to remove the potency of the evil-eye and then thrown on the ground at his right hand. As the party enters the house, loud acclamations of "ha, ha," are made by the persons assembled. As the auspicious hour approaches, the bride's *enangan* performs the Ganapati *pūja* and officiates as the priest. The bride and the bridegroom offer *dakshina* (gifts) to the Brahmans present. The bridegroom sits on a plank facing the east, while the bride with a garland in her hand goes thrice round him, and putting the garland round his neck, sits on his left. Then the left hand of the bridegroom and the right hand of the bride are joined together by the *enangan* amidst the loud acclamations of the by-standers.¹ Offerings of *dakshina*, etc., to the Brahmans are then made by the bride and the bridegroom.

Among the thirty families, *Pānigrahanam* is in vogue, but the garlanding performed by the other sect at the auspicious hour is dispensed with. As the bridegroom enters the gate of the bride's house, an attempt is made to throw the garland round his neck, which is, however, evaded. Before *Pānigrahanam*, eleven fanams (or Rs. 3-2-0) is paid by the bridegroom's *enangan* as the price of the bride. After *Pānigrahanam*, which is the essential portion of the ceremony, the relatives on both sides, one by one, take a handful of rice and, touching the loins and shoulders of the bridal pair, throw it on their heads as a blessing and also pay a few annas or even a rupee as their means allow of it to defray the expenses of the feast. After this, the conjugal pair are conducted to a room specially decorated; but the bridegroom is not allowed to remain there long. Then follows the feast at which the guests assembled are sumptuously fed. On the second day the bride's party go to the bridegroom's house along with him, where the same formalities are gone through, and others assembled there are treated to feasts for two days. Just at the moment of their starting, the bride's father and her

1. The reformed party among them insist upon the tali-tying by the bridegroom at the time.

enangan go thrice round the decorated pandal, and the former makes a solemn announcement, in the presence of those assembled in the court-yard, that his daughter has been given in marriage to the said young man, and that he gives as a dowry one hundred fanams (or Rs. 28-9-0) worth of gold ornaments, one hundred palams weight of vessels, a milch cow and calf, and that he expects kind and loving treatment and support for his daughter from his son-in-law. The married couple return to the bride's house on the fourth day, where they stay a week or two, during which their nuptials take place without any ceremony.¹

Immediately after, the bridegroom returns home along with the bride, and thereafter they live as husband and wife. Neither polygamy nor polyandry prevails among them: but widows re-marry. A woman, after the death of her husband, lives in his house under pollution for twelve days. If she is young and inclined to re-marry, she severs her connection with the family of her husband in the presence of her caste people and returns to her home. By her subsequent marriage, she forfeits all claims to maintenance by the husband's family. Should she have had children by the deceased husband, they are maintained out of his family funds, and generally looked after by the members of that family; but the relation between the mother and the children, though living separately, lasts for ever. The right of a widow for maintenance from the family funds of her deceased husband, after her formal separation, is a question that has yet to be decided in a court of law. Now, as a general rule, the woman is supported by her father or brother. Grown-up women and others unwilling to marry after their husbands' death prefer to pass the rest of their life in their families. Among the Kadupattans, divorce is easy enough, and it may arise on any of the causes set forth in my account of the high caste Nayars.

In some cases, even ill-feeling between the parents of the two parties may cause a separation between a loving married couple. The chance of getting a more handsome wife or the chance of the woman securing a better husband may also serve

1. Those who cannot afford to give any dowry to their daughters give her a *kinnam* (a bell-metal dish for taking food) and a *kindi* (a bell-metal vessel for drinking water). The ornaments are: *Thoda* (ear ornament), *Mookkuthi* (nose ornament), *Poottu mani* or *Oruttu mani*, a kind of necklace, and anklets of silver.

as a cause for divorce. If the husband wishes to divorce his wife, he together with a few of his caste-men and the *enangan* goes to her paternal house and informs her parents of his intention. A list of the expenditure since the time of the marriage incurred by both sides is made, and the party who had incurred the greater expense being indemnified, the divorce is complete. As a general rule, the husband relinquishes the eleven fanams paid for the bride.

Should a woman before marriage become pregnant, and the fact become publicly known, the custom was that her paramour was compelled to marry her, but many now are of opinion that she should be outcasted.

Customs connected with pregnancy, child-birth and other post-natal ceremonies are the same as those prevailing among the Nayars.

Among the Kadupattans, inheritance is in the male line ; but there is a sub-caste (Ponathies) somewhat lower in status to the main community, among whom both forms of inheritance are in vogue. The daughters may succeed to the property of their father in the absence of a son, but it can take place only after the death of their mother. Compulsory partition is also allowed.

In every *desam* or village, there are some leading families, the senior members or *karanavans* of which form the head-men of the caste. Among the thirty-two families, the members are divided for the purpose of local jurisdiction in social matters, into four sub-divisions called *muppathirandoos* (thirty-twos) generally held at Manjapara, Kóttai, Pallanchathanur and Kootallur. There are several villages under the assembly in each of these divisions. There are three assemblies, one higher than the other, namely, (1) village councils, (2) *muppathirandoos* (consisting of the representatives of the various villages), and (3) four *muppathirandoos* (representatives of the whole community). They deal with all matters affecting the welfare of the whole community ; but formerly, all offences, both of a civil and criminal nature, were brought for their arbitration and decision. The offences now brought to the notice are cases of adultery, a Kadupattan taking meals in any of the houses of the prohibited caste-men, performing marriage or other ceremonies when under pollution, marriage within the prohibited degrees of

relationship and violations of caste rules. When any such offence is committed by a member of the caste and it is brought to the notice of the head-man of the village, he convenes a meeting of the elders of that village. They summon the offender before them and enquire into the matter. If the offence is proved, and the offender confesses, he is punished with a small fine. If he does not confess and the offence is proved, he is outcasted, and the matter is reported to the assemblies of the other divisions. In such a case, he is forbidden from any intercourse with his caste-men, he has no *enangan* (the member of the caste without whose help he cannot perform any ceremony), he cannot get his son or daughter married, and the village barber and washerman will no longer render their services to him. The culprit thus is ostracised from the rest of the community. If the offender then changes his mind so as to submit to the decision of his caste-men, he applies to the caste-men of the village to convene a meeting for the trial, and deposits the necessary amount of money to defray the expenses thereof. The leading members of his village as well as those of the neighbouring ones are invited, and when they assemble, he makes a formal request to them to take up his case. They fully enquire into the matter and pronounce their judgment. He is either fined or outcasted. In the former case, he deposits the necessary fine on a plank in front of them, which is equally divided among them or set apart for some charitable purpose; in the latter case, he severs his connection with his caste-men in all social functions. He becomes a member of the Ponathi sub-division.

The Kadupattans belong to the caste of Sudras, and their worship is the same as that of the Nayars (vide Religion of the Nayars). Very seldom do Brahmans act as priests for them. Among the members of the thirty-two families, the priest is called the *Kurukkal*, who gives *upadésam* (advice) as to the method of worshipping the deities and for purification of the body known as *kalasam*. For ceremonial purposes, the services of the *enangan* are indispensable.

When a Kadupattan dies, the caste-men of the village are informed, and they assemble in the house of the dead, while one of them acts as *enangan* and brings a pot of water to wash the dead body. The male

Religion.

Funeral customs.

members of the family bathe themselves and carry the corpse out into the court-yard where it is laid on a plantain leaf and covered. At the time of removal, the wife removes the *tali* (marriage badge) which signifies that conjugal life is at an end. The dead body is then washed and dressed, and all the women related to him walk round the dead body as a mark of respect, and, in passing, each throws on it a piece of cloth, and these are the perquisites of the barber who discharges some priestly functions during the funeral days. The body is then removed to the south-eastern part of the compound and placed upon the funeral pile, when the eldest son applies fire to the pile and all those assembled wait until the body is burned and reduced to ashes. The assembly then disperses, but each individual must bathe before returning home. The members of the family of the deceased return home after their bath and are served with meals from a neighbouring house, for there can be no cooking in the house of the dead. From the next day to the seventh, the usual *pinda bali* (rice-ball offering) is offered up to the spirit of the departed; and on the morning of the seventh day is performed the *sanchayanam* or the ceremony of collecting the bones. The junior members of the family as well as the chief mourner are shaved, and purifying themselves by a bath and wearing a *mattu* (a washed cloth brought by the washerman), they go to the spot where the body was burnt. They collect the bones, some of which are kept apart to be deposited in Benares, Gaya, Rameswaram, or Péroor, while the others are placed in a pot of unbaked clay, which is then carried home by the son who is usually the chief mourner and is placed on a mortar in front of the house. The inmates of the house make an obeisance before it and touch the burial urn as a mark of respect. After this, it is buried by the side of a river or a tank. When the pot is removed for burial, each woman of the family except the eldest gives the barber and the washerman a few measures of paddy, while the eldest gives the same quantity of rice to each of them. There is also a feast for those assembled in the house. Pollution is observed for ten days, and on the evening of the tenth, offerings are made to the spirit of the departed which are thrown into a tank or river. The members of the family close their pollution by bath with *mattu*, when water is sprinkled on their bodies as they dip into the water. *Chithayan* cleans the house and compound. Among

the Karapurattukár, there is a separate family, the members of which discharge the functions assigned to them, and they are, on this account, held in a low estimation. But among the other sect, it is the barber who performs this work. The members are free from pollution on the eleventh day, and on ~~the~~ the twelfth, a ceremony corresponding to *srádha* is performed. In well-to-do families, the eldest son who is the chief mourner bathes early in the morning and offers the sacrificial offerings to the spirit of the departed either for forty-one days or for a whole year, at the end of which, he performs the first anniversary ceremony, for which a member of the caste is invited, sumptuously fed, and dismissed with a gift of a few annas, a fan, a stick and an umbrella.

The dead bodies of middle-aged as well as of old persons are burned, while those who have died of small-pox, cholera or any other infectious disease as also those of children, are buried. In the latter case, the seventh day ceremony is dispensed with. There is no common cremation ground, but they use the south-eastern corner of their own compounds. The pollution is, in all the cases, only for ten days, and all the subsequent anniversaries are performed on the day of the same asterism. The son or the chief mourner fasts for the night previous, and the *enangan* is invited on the morning of the anniversary day. He bathes early, prepares the rice-balls, and sitting on a plank, his feet are washed. Some *púja* is also performed, and offerings are made in the belief that he represents the spirit of the deceased. He is then treated to a feast, after which the performer eats the remains of the food. He is also furnished with rice-cakes (*ada*) for his supper that day. On the new moon nights in Karkadakam, Thulam and Makaram, a similar *púja* is performed.

For those who die in pregnancy or child-birth, they have the same sort of ceremonies, in addition to which a 'porter's rest' with an inscription to commemorate the name of the dead is placed on the road-side underneath a shady tree as a mark of charity.

The primary occupation of the caste-men is teaching, and there are many village school masters of this kind in rural parts. There are also others who are astrologers, physicians, magicians, etc. In former times, when salt was manufactured in the State, they were

Occupation.

largely engaged in the selling of that commodity; but, at present, they are agriculturists, either landlords, substantial farmers or agricultural labourers, and they form about 2·3 per cent. of the Hindu population and 1·6 per cent. of the total population of the State. The poor among them work as ordinary day labourers earning four or five annas a day, and some even act as domestic servants.

As has been already said, they belong to the class of low caste Sudras. They pollute the high caste Nayars by touch, and are allowed to enter only the outer enclosure of temples as far as the *bali kallu* (sacrificial stone). However, to-day they are agitating for, and bringing forward, their claims to be treated as high caste Nayars. They eat the food of the Brahmans, Ambalavásis and Nayars, but abstain from taking food from the rest of the low caste Sudras, and are also polluted by the touch of other low caste Sudras. In respect of the tuft of hair, dress, ornament, language and matters of lesser importance, they closely resemble the Nayars, but there are traces to show that they were a *paradési* (foreign) caste.

Conscious of the low estimation in which they are held by the high-caste-men, the Kadupattans have, of late years, organised an association called *Adhyāpaka Samājam* to introduce certain reforms, social and religious, for the advancement of their community. Several meetings have been held during the last three years, both in the State and in the adjacent British territories. The following are some of the reforms carried out by them:—

(1) *Marriage customs*:—The ceremony of the formal settlement (*Achāra kalyānam* or betrothal) made before the wedding is to be abolished, and in its place is to be substituted formal promise of the bride's father to the father of the bridegroom. The *tāli*-tying, which is generally performed by the mother and is meaningless, must be done away with, and the *tāli* which is the marriage badge must be tied by the husband at the time of the marriage as in the case of Brahmans. The bridegroom's dress on the wedding day should be simple and neat. Polygamy can be allowed with the consent of the *Samājam* only under dire necessity. Widow marriage is allowed, and the formalities connected with it are the same as those of first marriage. Divorce, however, is greatly discouraged.

(2) *Funeral customs*:—The observance of the *Deekshu* may be for twelve or forty-one days or even a year, according to the wish and convenience of the chief mourner. The caste priest should have a proper training for the performance of all ceremonies, and the services of the *Cheetiyan* on the eleventh day for purification from pollution should be dispensed with, and replaced by those of Brahmans. Pollution from death is for ten days, and the purification on the eleventh day should be by taking *punnyúham* (holy water) after sacrificial offerings have been made to the departed spirit, and after bathing in a tank or river. Then should follow the *Athúzhm* on the night of the eleventh day, and the feast to the caste-men on the twelfth day.

(3) The caste-men and women are prohibited from taking the food of any other caste-men except that of the Brahmans.

(4) The education of women, so as to fit them for proper house-management, the nursing and up-bringing of children, is receiving the earnest attention of the caste-men.

(5) The title of Ezhuthachan should be obtained chiefly by merit and not by the payment of money (*thirumulkázhcha*) to some chieftain or Nambuthiri landlord.

(6) Those of the caste-men who have been in jail for any crime, when set free after their period of confinement, may be re-admitted into the caste only after due *práyaschitham*.

(7) The necessity of inter-dining and inter-marriage between the members of the two main sub-divisions is urged on the principle that union is strength.

(8) Branch associations are being organised in every locality where there is a large number of Kadupattans.

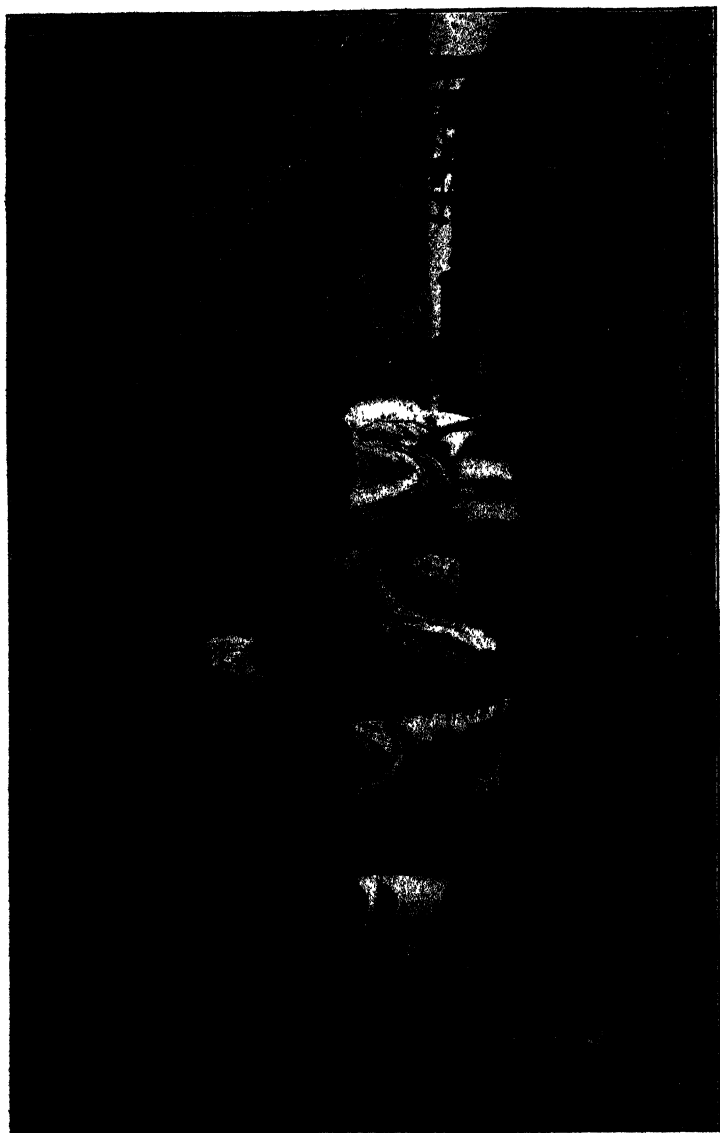
The holy-thread (*púníl*) should be worn by the priest and the bridegroom, and all ceremonies previous to this should be celebrated before tali-tying.

The Kadupattans in the State, during the last Census, numbered 13,063; of these, 6,477 were males, and 6,586 females. They are a backward community, but are doing their best for their social elevation.

Conclusion

THE VELAKKATHALAVANS.

They are the professional village barbers, and shave Nayers and all castes above them. Their customs with regard to marriages, inheritance, and religion, are similar to those of



CHALIENS WITH THEIR TINY WORKSHOP

the Nayers; their birth and death pollutions last for ten days. The Nambuthiris give them *punnyāham* or holy water for purification. The *enangan* ties the *tāli* for a girl, and he or somebody else may unite himself in *sambandham* to her either before or after she comes of age, but the tali-tying ceremony must be performed before she reaches puberty, or she will lose her caste. In the last Census they numbered 2,761; of these, 1,309 were males, and 1,452 females. A few families of these people are to be found in every village, and their services are employed for all ceremonious and other occasions. They are allowed to enter the outer enclosure of temples as far as the *bali kallu* (sacrificial stone). They too, like the Kadupattans, are a backward community, but unlike them are at present making no efforts to rise in the social scale.

THE VELUTHEDANS.

They are the village washermen whose degradation, like that of the Velakkathalavans, is chiefly due to the occupation they follow. Though their touch pollutes the castes above them, the Nambuthiris wear clothes washed by them without being in any way polluted, and the clothes washed by them are used even for dressing the idols in the temples. It has been so ordained by the great Sri Sankarāchariār. In matters, religious and social, they follow customs precisely similar to those of the Nayers. A sub-caste 'Pothuven' among them performs purificatory ceremonies, ¹ while, for other purposes, the *enangan* is their priest. In the last Census they numbered 3,152; of these, 1,536 were males, and 1,616 females.

THE CHALIYANS.

They are a caste of weavers found in Irinjalakuda, Cranganore, Aripalam, and other places in the Cochin State. Though they are said to have been a Tamil caste in former times, they are now completely Malayaliaised. They appear to be immigrants from the Tamil districts, and keep the original habit of living in streets.

The Chaliyans are a class of weavers found chiefly in the district of Tanjore, and their original home appears to have been the Andhara country, from whence a section of these people were invited by the

Traditional origin.

1. They are also the caste barbers, and are looked upon as somewhat lower than the rest of the caste. In matters of tali-tying, the caste is endogamous.

Chola king, Raja Raja I, after the union of the eastern Chalukya and the Chola dynasties. The early Chaliyans, who immigrated into Malabar and Cochin in ancient times, may very likely have been a section of the Chaliyans above referred to.

With regard to their immigration into Cochin, the following tradition is told by a member of the caste. In order to procure cotton thread spun by some Chaliyan maidens which he required for the *Kalasam* or purificatory ceremony in the Tiruvanchikulam temple, the great Cheraman Perumal had a few families of Chaliyans brought from Kanjee-puram, and allowed them to reside in Cranganore. He also rewarded them with lands, tax free, for the services rendered to him. A similar story is also told about their coming to Malabar. It is said, that one of the Zamorins, who wished to introduce the worship of Ganapati to which the Chaliyans were much devoted, entrusted his minister, Manghát Acchan, with the entertainment of the new arrivals. These people were supposed to belong to a high caste, and the Zamorin's minister, who was nettled with their fastidiousness and constant complaints, managed to degrade them in a body by the trick of secretly mixing fish with their food.¹ They do not, like their brethren (Sálians) of the east coast, wear *púnúl*, but their caste priests, while performing certain *pújas*, wear it over their right shoulder instead of over the left like the Brahmans.

The Chaliyans are divided into two sects or factions, *viz.*, the right hand sect, and the left hand sect. The former are said to be superior to the latter in social status, and consider themselves polluted when touched by the members of the left hand section. There is neither inter-marriage nor inter-dining between the members of the two sections. They must have settled in Malabar some time after the occurrence of the dispute which gave rise to the two parties, about the eleventh century.

The Chaliyans owe a kind of allegiance to the Chief of Cranganore and furnish cloths of their own weaving for the funeral ceremonies of the members of his family. They also supply them with cotton thread for their *púnúl*.

The customs connected with the matrimonial alliance of the Chaliyans are like those of the Nayars.

Marriage customs.

The girls of the Chaliyans have two forms of

¹. Malabar Gazetteer page 122.

marriage. The tali-tying ceremony for girls is performed before they come of age. There should be a separate tali-tier for every girl, and he should be one of her *enangu*. It is a ceremony which lasts for four days, and the formalities connected with it are the same as those among the Nayers; but, on the morning of the fourth day, the married couple bathe, and worship the deity in the local temple, after which they return home, when the bride serves food to the tali-tier. This signifies that she, as wife, has begun to discharge her duties of cooking and serving the food to the husband; but the marital relations are only ephemeral; for, after his meals he is dismissed with presents. If the tali-tier wishes to marry her, he may do so, if the girl's parents have no objection. He has, in that case, to supply her with cloths. For the adult marriage or *sambandham*, the customs slightly vary. On the auspicious day fixed for the ceremony, the parents of the bridegroom, his uncle and relatives, go to the bride's house where they are properly welcomed. At the auspicious hour, the girl is presented with the wedding dress which they have brought, and the party assembled are sumptuously entertained, after which they depart from the bride's house. On a similar auspicious day, the bridegroom and his *enangan* visit the bride and stay there for a few days, during which nuptials are celebrated. After this he returns home with his wife, who either stays there with her husband or returns to her house after a week or two. Here she is visited by her husband as often as he likes, going in the evening and returning in the next morning. There is neither polygamy nor polyandry prevailing among them, but widows may marry. The customs connected with pregnancy, child-birth and the post-natal ceremonies for children are the same as those in vogue among the Nayers.

Among the Chaliyans, inheritance is in the male line.

Inheritance.

They have their caste assemblies, and the elderly members composing them meet whenever necessary to deliberate upon caste disputes, and their decisions are final.

Religion.

They adore Ganapati who is their tutelary deity. Bhagavati is also specially worshipped by the caste-men. In Travancore and British Malabar, they have temples of their own, in which the caste-men themselves officiate as priests. In the Cochin State, they have no temples;

for they are very poor. They are also much addicted to devil dancing, and the ceremonies in connection with it are performed by some of their members, who act as *Velichapáda*. Vettakkorumakan and Gulikan are their minor gods.

The dead bodies are generally burned, and the funeral ceremonies are performed by the sons and nephews, either separately or conjointly. The pollution is for fifteen days, and on the morning of the sixteenth, the purificatory ceremonies are all performed by the Cheethiyan, who is a member of the somewhat degraded section of the caste. The caste-men are treated to a feast on the night, both on the fifteenth and the sixteenth day. Other customs are the same as those among the Nayars.

The primary occupation of the Chaliyans is weaving. There are also a few traders and cultivators among them. Their is no organised industry on a large scale. The clothes they weave are small coarse ones for the use of the poor people.

The following account of the Chaliyans is taken from the 'Travels of Duarte Barbosa':—

"There is another set of gentiles still lower, whom they call Chaliyans, who are weavers, and have no other business except to weave cloths of cotton, and some of silk, which are of little value, and are used by the common people. And these also have a sect and form of idolatry apart. Their lineage does not mix with any others; only the Nayars may have mistresses amongst the women of their people so that they do not enter their houses without bathing and changing their clothes whenever they have visited them. Many of these are sons of Nayars, and so they are very fine men in their figures, and they bear arms like the Nayars and go to wars and fight very well. In marriages they have the law of the Nayars, and their sons do not inherit. Their wives have the power of doing what they please with themselves, with the Nayars, or with other weavers, and they cannot mix with any other lineage under pain of death."

THE TARAKANS.

The Tarakans were originally a Tamil caste of people who have, within living memory, developed into Nayars in whose midst they at present live, still retaining some of the old customs. They are found chiefly in the Chittur Taluk of the State, and in the adjacent British parts of the Palghat Taluk. They are closely allied to the Múttans of Palghat and Walluvanad Taluks, but they would consider it a disgrace to acknowledge any affinity with them. The word 'Tarakan' literally means a 'broker'. Dr. Gundert says, that they were originally warehouse-keepers at Palghat. It is said that a

Muttan may, in course of time, become a Tarakan and then a Nayar.

The following account is given by Dr. Buchanan regarding the origin of the caste:—"They are chiefly of the kind called Taragamar, who are a sort of brokers, or rather warehouse-keepers. They have store-houses, in which merchants coming from the east or west deposit their goods until they can dispose of them to those coming from the opposite quarter. The principals in general remain to make in person their sales and purchases; but some of them, that are rich, employ the Taragamar of this place to sell their goods. The merchants that frequent this mart are those of Colicodu (Calicut), Tiruvana-Angadi, Paniani-Vacul (Ponnany), Parupanad, Tanur (Tannore), Manapuran, Valatire, Manjeri, Puten-Angadi, Shavacadu (Chowghat), and Cochi (Cochin) on the west; and Coimbatore, Dindigul, Darapuram, Salem, Sati-Mangala, Palani (Pulni), Wadumalay-Cottai, Trichinapoly, Tanjore, Madura, Tinnevely, Madras, and Seringapatam from the east."

"The broker is not answerable for fire or theft; nor is he even bound to pay any loss that may happen from the badness of his store-houses. The commission is $\frac{1}{4}$ of a fanam (14 pies) on every Tolam of weighable goods, whether they be stored seven days or one year which is at the rate of $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. a cwt. Cloth merchants always sell their own goods. On each load, they pay as warehouse rent half a fanam. The brokers say, that during the reign of Tippu they had a more extensive trade than at present. Even after Malabar fell into the hands of the English the trade with Coimbatore was not interrupted. These assertions appear to me highly improbable; but I am not able to ascertain the truth; for the reports of the custom-house, which Mr. Warden was so good as to send me through the commissioners, have not reached my hands."¹

There is no sub-division in the caste. A Tarakan girl is married either before or after she comes of age. The bridegroom who is a member of the caste is not the tali-tyer, though he is the husband of the girl. On an auspicious day chosen for the wedding ceremony, he goes with his party to the bride's house, neatly dressed in a *soman* and *vaishti* like a Tamil Sudra bridegroom, with a knife stuck in the girdle, a silver thread over his left shoulder, a turban over his head, and

¹ A journey through Mysore, Canara and Malabar, Vol. II, pages 359-360.

there they are properly welcomed. The auspicious hour for tali-tying is announced by the village astrologer, when an elderly member of the caste goes inside the house and ties the *tali* round the neck of the girl, who is dressed and adorned in her best, and seated in a conspicuous part of the house. The bride's uncle takes her to the pandal in front of the house, and seats her by the side of the bridegroom close to a pole (*Brimhankal*), when at the auspicious hour announced by the astrologer the left hand of the bride and the bridegroom are placed one over the other by the officiating caste priest or his wife. The close contact of the left hands (*Pánigrahanam*) is the binding portion of the ceremony. The marriage is formally over, though the festivities last for four days. On the morning of the fifth day the married couple bathe, and neatly dressed, adore the local deity. Then after a feast, as during the previous four days, the bridegroom and his party return home with the bride, and live thereafter as husband and wife. The consummation takes place on the night of either the first or the third day. Neither polygamy nor polyandry prevails among them. Their widows never marry. The inheritance is through the male line.

They have their caste assemblies, which consist of the elderly members who meet on all important occasions concerning the well-being of the caste; and their functions are precisely similar to those described in the account of the allied castes.

In religion they are like other low caste Sudras. They adore Bhagavati or Káli in particular. The dead bodies of the Tarakans are either burned or buried. The son is the chief mourner who performs the funeral ceremonies. The pollution lasts for ten days and on the morning of the eleventh day, after the usual rice-ball offerings, all the agnates wearing the *mattu* (cloth brought by the washerman) bathe and become free from pollution. The priest, *Chovattom*, who is a member of their own caste, assists at their funeral ceremonies and purifies them at the end of pollution. His functions are like those of the Attikurussi Nayars. He is also the priest in the Bhagavati temples. The Tarakans are either cultivators or traders and many do cooly work. As regards their social status, they are classed among the low caste Sudras, though they are unwilling to be treated as such. They eat the food of the Kiriyaatil

Nayars, but abstain from taking the meals prepared by the members of the other sub-divisions among the Nayars. They numbered 783 at the last Census, 368 being males and 415 females.

The members of the five castes which form the low caste Sudras are comparatively poorer than those of the other sub-divisions among the Nayars, and live mainly by their traditional occupations. Velakkathalavans and Veluthédans are degraded on account of their work, while the Kadupattans, Cháliyans, and Tarakans, who are not entitled to similar treatment, are treated as low caste Sudras, because their status has not been defined in old works dealing with Malayali castes which have long been in existence. They all belong to a backward community.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AMBALAVASIS.

THE term 'Ambalavasi' is a generic caste name, which includes the various divisions or sub-castes whose occupation is temple service in some form or other. In the *Keralamahātmiyam* they are known as *Kshétravasins*; ¹ and they rank below the Brahmans and Kshatriyas, but are above the Sudras. Most of the sub-castes have grown out of the sexual relations between the members of the higher and lower classes, and are on that account called *Pratilómajás* ² and *Anulómajás*. ³ They may broadly be divided into two communities, *viz.*, those who wear the *púnúl* or sacred thread, and those who do not. To the former belong the Múttatu, Adikal, Chákkiyar, Pushpaka Nambiyar and Thiyyáti Nambiyar, and to the latter, Chákkiyar Nambiyar, Váriyar, Pishároti, Puthuvál, and Márar. The customs and manners of each of these sub-castes are categorically treated in the following pages.

THE NAMBIDIS.

The Nambidis form one of the divisions of the *Antarálars* ⁴ and hold an intermediate position between Brahmans and Kshatriyas on the one hand and the Sudras (Nayars) on the other. Regarding the origin of these people, the following tradition is current. One of the Perumals of Kerala (Chola Perumal or the second of the Perumals) became so troublesome to the Brahmans that they resolved upon his removal. The Perumal was attacked, and in the struggle that followed was killed by them. When the Brahmans who were engaged in the murder returned to the place where their caste-men had

1. Dwellers in temples, i. e., servants in temples.

2. Issue of a female of a higher caste with the male of a lower one.

3. Issue of a male of a higher caste with a female of a lower one.

4. Castes between the Kshatriyas and the Sudras.

met, they were gladly welcomed and told to sit in their midst, but the thought of their having committed so heinous a crime so far overpowered them, that they felt themselves disqualified for seats along with the caste-men. They volunteered to sit apart on the threshold of the council room and said, "*Nām Patimēl*" (we on the threshold). This incidentally accounts for the origin of their name, Nampati or Nambidi.

There are two main divisions among them, the members of one wear the *pūnūl*, while those of the other are without it. Of the *pūnūl* wearing members, again, there are two classes, viz., *Aiyinikoor Nambidis* and *Mattudésathu Nambidis*. The latter pollute the former by touch and are not allowed to dine with them. Those that do not wear the sacred thread are said to be Nayars who possess the title of Nambidi.¹

Of the *pūnūl* wearing Nambidis, the *Aiyinikoor Nambidis* or the members of the five families are historically and socially the most important; and the eldest male member possesses the special title of *Kakkāt Kāranavapād*, enjoying special privileges at the hands of the rulers of Cochin, as the members of the family once held responsible posts in the militia of the State.

The most important person believed to have been engaged in the murder was the *Kakkāt Nambuthiri*, a member of the *Kakkāt* family, near Kunnankulam. As a reward for the patriotic action, Chāvakad (the territory extending along the sea-board from Veliengod to the furthest limit of the Taluk) was bestowed upon him. His descendants were at first independent princes of Chavakad, but were too weak to resist the aggressions of their powerful neighbours, the Cochin Raja (whose capital then was at Perumpatappu, six miles south of Ponnani, where an old temple and the site of an old palace are still to be seen) and the Zamorin, who, bit by bit, deprived them of their territories. Finally, in 1791, the Nambidi was reduced to the humiliating position of his own revenue collector, and an allowance of Rs. 20,000 per annum being estimated at one-fifth of the revenue is paid to him from the Zamorin's Málikhána.²

The Nambidis have, since then, been regarded as having lost their status as Brahmans, and are now classed among the intermediate castes with a few more privileges than those

1. Kerala Avakasa Kramam, page 25.

2. Malabar Gazetteer, page 449.

enjoyed by members of the allied castes. The males wear the sacred thread and recite the *Gh̥yatri* ten times. Their marriage customs also are like those of the Brahmans, and the bridegroom who is also the *tali-tier* is a member of the same caste. Their women consort with the Nambuthiris by *sambandham* alliance, while the males generally consort with the Nayar women. Inheritance among them is in the female line.¹

At public feasts they are not allowed to sit with the Nambuthiris, though the latter act as priests at their marriage ceremonies, *Sr̥ādha*, and purification at the end of birth and death pollutions, which, like those of Brahmans, last for ten days; nevertheless, even the Ambalavāsīs do not take their meals. Their women are called Manólpáds. The Nambidīs numbered 478 at the last Census.

THE ADIKALS.

The word 'Adikals' means slaves or servants. They are said to have been originally Brahmans, and their degradation is ascribed to their having officiated as priests in Bhadrakali temples, to their having adored the goddess with the offerings of flesh and liquor, and also to their having partaken of the same.² They practise certain forms of exorcism, and worship some evil spirits—further facts which are said to account for their degradation. Even in temples where they officiate as priests they have to make room for Nambuthiris or Embrans on some occasions. The following is another story which throws some light on their origin. Wishing to test the fidelity of the Brahmans to the established rules of the caste, the great religious reformer Sankarachariar went to a liquor shop and drank some liquor. The Brahmans who accompanied him drank the same liquor without comprehending that such restrictions were not binding on the great reformer. The sage then went into a foundry and drank a cup of the molten metal; when a similar cup of the melted liquid was offered to them, they thankfully declined the offer as being Adikals or humble servants, accepting the degradation which such conduct brought upon them.³ They too wear the sacred thread and repeat the *Gh̥yatri* ten times. Birth and death pollutions last

1. Kerala Avakasa Kramam, pages 32 and 33.

2. Kerala Visesha Mahatmiam, page 46.

3. Travancore Manual, page 335.



ADIKAL WOMEN.

for eleven days. They have their own priests. Their women are called *Adiyammamar* and wear the same ornaments (*śālikūttam*) as the Nambuthiri women, but they are not *goshā*. They numbered 25 at the last Census. They follow inheritance in the female line. *Pitāranmar* and *Pattōla Mūsath* also perform priestly service in the same temples; but the three castes neither interdine nor intermarry.

THE MUTTATUS.

With regard to the origin and status of this sub-caste, there is some difficulty. They are generally classed among the Ambalavasis; and the caste name itself suggests that they are the eldest (of the Ambalavasis) as the *Ilayatus* are the youngest or the most degraded of the Brahmans.¹ There is a popular Malayalam saying which supports this statement. In the opinion of the most learned of the *Vaidikans* of the State, they are a class of inferior Brahmans, who are supposed to have suffered social degradation for having tattooed their bodies with figures representing the weapons of the God Siva and for eating the *nivēdyam* (rice offered to him). They are said to be descended from the union of a *Sivadwijā* Brahman with a pure Brahman girl, which is a *Prathiloma* union to some extent or one violating the rule of hypergamy. It is also said, that they are identical with the Nambians or *Sivadwijas* of the east coast; and this puts an end to all objections that might make one hesitate to place them amongst the Ambalavasis.² Their marital relations, duties in temples, their dependence on Nambuthiris for priestly functions and caste government, entitle them to be placed under the same division of the Ambalavasis. The members of this caste seem to have undergone some slight elevation, and they now observe the customs of the Brahmans in all respects.

1. Cochin Census Report, page 145.

The following are the titles bestowed upon them by the rulers in ancient times: (a) Nambi, a trustworthy person; (b) Nanthayanathil Nambi (given by one of the Zamorins—a title corresponding to minister); (c) Kovil Nambi, for having defended a temple from being plundered by one of the parties in a war between the Zamorin and the Valluvanad Raja; (d) Velutha Nambiyar, Karutha Nambiyar of Thiruvanchikulam; (e) Vattapallisthanikar of Suchendra; (f) Valia Muttatu of Tripunithura. (Vide judgment of Travancore High Court, Appeal Suit No. 428 of 1951, reversing that of the Zillah Court in U. S. No. 327 of 1951. The suit was filed by the famous and learned Pachi Muttatu against Gopala Varman Tirumalpaḍ for defamation in respect of certain observations regarding the origin of the caste.)

2. Kerala Avakasa Kramam, pages 31 and 32.

The caste is now endogamous. The girls of the Muttatu are married both before and after puberty, and the formalities connected with the marriage are precisely those observed for Brahman girls. The eldest son marries for the sake of a son to offer oblations to the spirits of the departed, while the junior members of the family enter into *sambandham* with Nayar women. It is an expensive matter to obtain a bridegroom among them as among the Nambuthiris, and girls remain long without marriage. Polygamy is in vogue among them, and it is resorted to chiefly for the sake of the marriage of sisters or daughters. The customs connected with pregnancy, child-birth, and the post-natal ceremonies are the same as those prevailing among the Nambuthiris.

Inheritance is in the male line, and it is a violation of the law laid down by Parasurama.¹ The eldest male member manages the affairs of the family. In all matters connected with caste disputes, the Nambuthiri *Vaidiks* are consulted, and their decisions are final.

They are only Sivites in religion. In temples, they take the idol (*utsavavigraham*) in a *tadambu* (a sort of wooden shield with a small shelf in the centre in which the idol or *vigraham* is placed) in procession, sweep and wash the steps immediately in front of the shrine, and in fact they supply all articles used as offerings to the deity in temples, where they do all quasi-priestly functions, and for their services they get the lion's share of the offerings. They are on this account called Agaputhuvals (inside Puthuvals).

These are similar to those of the Brahmans. The son is the chief mourner, and a non-vedic Nambuthiri officiates as the priest for the performance of these ceremonies. The pollution for death as for birth lasts for ten days, and the services of the priest are employed for the purificatory ceremony which is performed at the end of that time. His services are also necessary for the purificatory ceremony of a girl who bathes on the fourth day after her first menses.

As already said, their social status is one of dispute, and in spite of the opinion of the *Vaidiks* that they are a class of inferior Brahmans, they are looked upon as only Ambalavasis. Yet, the highest class of

1. Kerala Avakasa Kr̥t̥nam, page 84.



MUTTATUS

Nambuthiris can cook and take their meals in the houses of those people who are said to pollute them by touch and whose water they cannot use when given by them, for fear of pollution. In the matter of giving *theertham* (sanctified water) and *prasádam* (leaving of offerings), a difference is made in some temples; the priest puts them in a vessel placed there for that purpose but does not give them in their hands as in the case of Brahmans. Again, when they take their meals in the *nálambalam* (the quadrangle of the temple), they have themselves to remove the leaves on which they have eaten, and this shows that they are in no way superior to the Ambalavasis, most of whom take the food cooked by them, while they eat the food only of the Brahmans, with whom there is no interdining. The caste-men live chiefly by their traditional occupations, and there are some who are physicians and Pandits. A few of them have, of late, begun to read English in schools, and some hold minor Government appointments. Their houses are called *illoms*, and their women *Manayammas* or *Illotammas*.

Mention must here be made of the *Músads*, who are a class of people closely allied to the Múttatu. They are of two classes, namely, *Karuga Músads* and *Kávil Músads*, both of whom wear *pínúl*. The former are so called because of *karuga*, a kind of grass used in the ceremonies, and the latter are a class of Ambalavasis identical with a class called *Pidárans*, who perform *púja* in Bhadrakali temples, and incident of which is the shedding of blood and the use of intoxicating liquor. There are some who do not wear *pínúl* nor perform *púja*, but attend to miscellaneous matters, *kazhakam* (temple service).

In matters of dress and ornaments, the Múttatu women are like those of the *Oóril Parishas*, a sub-division of the Nambuthiris.

THE ILAYATUS.

The members of this sub-caste were originally Nambuthiris who suffered social degradation for having officiated as priests at the funeral ceremonies of the Nayers whose family priests they have always been. They are divided into two minor divisions, called *Onnám Parisha* and *Rendám Parisha* (the first and second *parishas* or parties), and between these two divisions there is neither interdining nor intermarriage; nevertheless the males of the two parties make no objection to dining with one another. Further, the members of the first

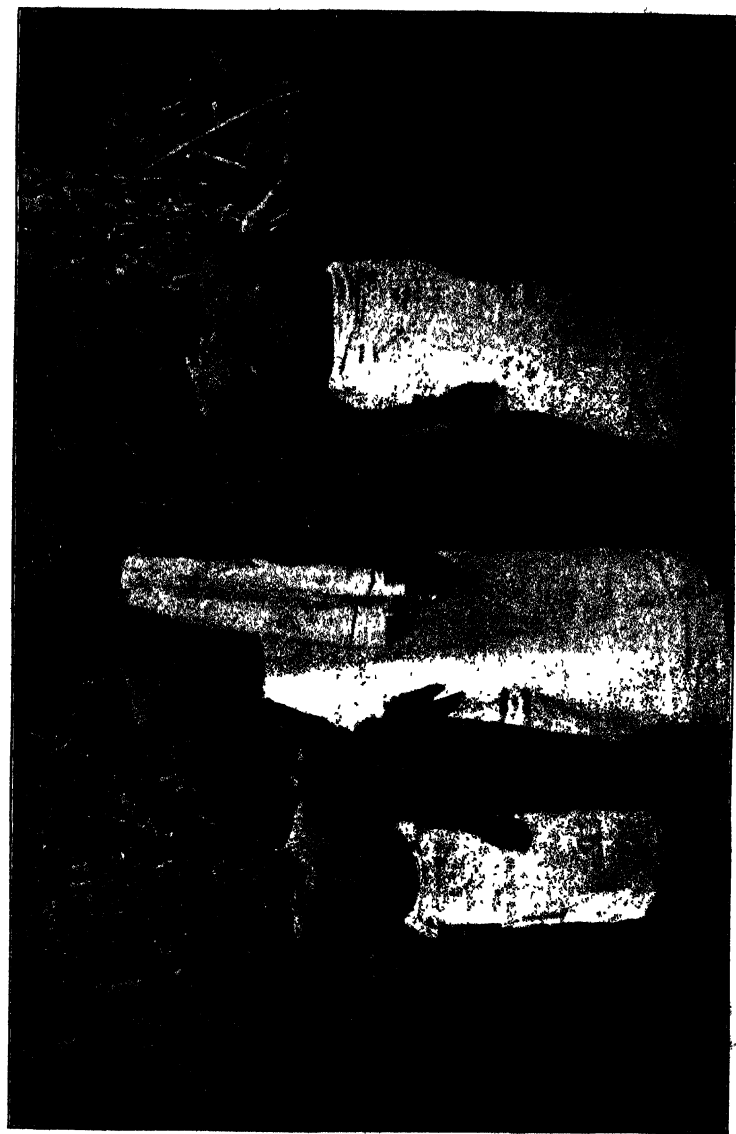
Parisha do not allow those of the second to take part in their ceremonies.¹ Formerly, they used to eat the food cooked by themselves in the out-houses of the Nayars during the performance of *Srddha* ceremonies, but this they have now declined to do except in well-to-do families. All customs relating to *Upanayanam*, marriage, funeral, and other ceremonies, as well as the laws of inheritance² are precisely similar to those of the Brahmans. They are not entitled to study the *Vedas*, but can recite the *Gáyatri*. They are their own priests. The Nambuthiris do not take their meals in the houses of these people, nor do Kshatriyas and Nambuthiris take water from their wells, which shows that the latter consider themselves liable to be polluted by their touch. In public feasts, after the Brahmans have been fed, they are allowed to sit together to take their meals, along with the Ambalavasis, but at a distance from them, with something between them which may prevent their being seen by the latter. They now live chiefly by their traditional occupations. Though Ilayátús are somewhat more Brahmanical than the Múttatus, yet a vast majority of the Ambalavasis do not eat the food of these people. There are some temples where they are priests. Their houses are called *illoms*, the women are called *Elayorammas*, and though they dress and use personal ornaments of the same description as their Nambuthiri sisters, they, unlike the latter, are not *gosha*. A few years ago, the women of the sub-caste, like Nambuthiri sisters, used *mara kudas* (umbrellas to hide their faces) while going to temples for worship. The Nambuthiris resented at this and stopped it. This gave rise to a suit in one of the criminal courts. Some wealthy men among them are called Nambiyatis.

THE CHAKKIYARS.

The word 'Chákkíyar' is said to be a corrupt form of *Slághya Vákkukár* (those gifted with excellence in words) or *Slághya Kulakkár* (men of respectability). They are the sons born to Nambuthiri women, found guilty of adultery after the date at which such adultery is said to have begun. The children of other Nambuthiris by their wives born after their connection with the adulteress are also classed as such. The boys who have

1. Ilayatus of the first division render priestly service to all Sudras above the Pallichans, while those of the second only to Pallichans.

2. Kerala Avakasa Kramam, pages 29 and 30. Bhugolapuram, Chapter 48.



A CHAKIVAR AND TWO NANGIVARS

already been invested with the *púnul* when their mother is declared an adulteress become Chákkíyars, while those who have not yet been so invested become Chákkíyar Nambiyars, the Páripádan of Amarakosa. The girls join the latter caste and are known as Nángiyars. There is also another tradition with regard to the origin of these people. It is said that they were originally *paradésis* who belonged to the Sūda¹ caste—a caste the members of which were the offspring of Kshatriyas and Brahman women—and that a family of this caste migrated to Kerala in very ancient times.² When this family was about to be extinct, the offspring of an adulterous Brahman woman born during her criminal intimacy with other caste-men, but before detection, was adopted into the family and recognised as a separate caste. The Chákkíyars study the *Itihásás* and *Puráṇas*, and expound them by means of oral lectures known as *Chákkíyar-kúttu*, which is a permanent institution in most of the temples of Kerala.

The Chákkíyars perform all the post-natal ceremonies for their boys and girls at different ages. They have to perform the *Upanayanam* ceremony for boys and are allowed to recite the *Gáyatri* ten times. The tali-tying ceremony for girls is performed before they are twelve years of age, and the tali-tier who was once an *Arya Pattar* is now generally one of their own caste or a Thirumulpad, who may enter into *sambandham* with the girl after she comes of age. Save these, a Brahman alone can enter into matrimonial alliance with her. The males, on the other hand, can enter into wedlock with a girl of their own caste or of the Nambiyar. Their women are called *Illo-tammas*, and inheritance is in the female line. They are their own priests, but for purifications from birth and death pollutions which last for eleven days,³ the Nambuthiris act as their priests. They live chiefly by their traditional occupation known as *Chákkíyar-kúttu*. It is a kind of performance which consists of recitations of puranic stories and their explanations in a dramatic style for the edification of the audience composed of Brahmans,

1. The members of this mixed caste used to keep horses and drive cars in days of yore. Only a particular family of this caste however became famous for its knowledge of the Puranas and other sacred writings. *Agni Purana*.

2. Cochin Census Report, page 148; and Travancore Manual, Vol. II, page 332.

3. There is a story that Cheraman Perumal had a wife of the Chákkíyar caste, and it was not approved of by the prominent men. This led to their separation, and their descendants observe ten days' pollution. Those of the others observe the pollution for eleven days.

Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis, and Sudras. It has a religious significance and hence never takes place outside the temples. It is invariably one of the items in some of the festivals in important temples and is sometimes performed at the instance of some individuals in fulfilment of vows made by them. It lasts nearly three hours between 2 and 5 P. M.

The Chakkiyar, generally a middle-aged man, is well versed in Sanskrit and Malayalam, and his theme or discourse is generally one of the scenes of the Ramayana or the Mahabhārata, such as the birth of Rama, his marriage with Sita, Hanuman's visit to Sita, the burning of Lanka (Ceylon), the marriage of Pānchali, Subhadra, and Rugmani, Rājasuya Yagam, or Krishna's mission from the Pāndavas to Duryódhana for the partition of the kingdom. Special works, Dúthavākyam, Kounthéyāshtakam and others, have also been composed by writers like Méppattur Narayana Bhattathiripad. Numerous *upakathas* or episodes are brought in by way of illustration, and a clever man well knows how to humour and hold the attention of the audience. "His dramatic delivery, the marvellous flow of words, and the telling humour of his utterances are such as to keep the hearers spell-bound. The performance takes place in a special building (*kúttambalam*) outside the quadrangular edifice of the temple. In the centre of the *kúttambalam* is a dais on which is placed a three-legged stool, on which the Chakkiyar sits like the Súdā of old, while delivering his performance at Naimisaranyam before the *Rishis*. In front of him a bell-metal lamp (*nilavilakku*) is kept burning, the idea being that the Chakkiyar's discourse is in the presence of the God Agni. When the *kúttu* lasts for a number of days, the dais is generally decorated with a plantain tree having a bunch of plantains (*kulavāzha*) and festoons made of green cocoanut leaves (*kuruttōla*). His dress is in a very antiquated fashion with his crimson cloth turban, having its golden rim and silk embossments in the centre. On his right, sounding the cymbal, sits the Nangiyar, a woman of beauty, neat and simple in her white dress and fine knot of hair falling over the brow—an indispensable presence at the performance".¹ Behind him is the drummer (Nambiyar) with his copper metal drum called *mizhavu* sounded at short intervals to produce a dull, deep sound. It is a queer old instrument which has undergone no change since its first introduction by Parasurama. Sometimes, either

when an opportunity offers itself or when he feels confident in the tolerance of the officials present, the Chákkíyar, with mild sarcasm, expatiates on the conduct of men in authority. He is an amiable critic and has a charming manner of dealing with the weak points in the character of men. He is equally clever in detecting their good qualities and praising them. In ancient times this was probably the method adopted, a method more effective than the newspaper press of these days, on account of the critics being more qualified, and the occasions more select. The Chákkíyar is a contented man, and is satisfied with the small remuneration of two rupees given him for his performances. Three families, the Ammanur,¹ the Kuttanchérri in Nellivayi of the Talapilly Taluk, and the Pothi,² monopolise the privilege of holding these performances in all the important temples of the State. There is also a fourth family in Kurumbranad of North Malabar, a member of which comes in when invited by any of the above three. Each Chákkíyar has a specially selected Nambiyar family at each station, and this was settled by a judgment of Trichur Munsiff's Court in O. S. No. 149 of 1058, which was confirmed on appeal. It is remarkable that in the *Purushártam* section of the *Kúdiyáttam* performance, Chákkíyars humour the audience with pithy verses accurately describing all the temple servants, not without excluding himself also. His origin and the ceremonies, the concealment of the *púnul* (sacred thread) when approaching the august person of the sovereign, are plainly alluded to in these verses, which highly deserve to be published on account of their vivid descriptions. All the Chákkíyars do not know them, and those who have studied them would not furnish me with a copy of the verses. These are so rapidly recited that it is impossible for any clever man either to repeat or take notes of them afterwards.

The performances are of four kinds, namely, the ordinary one first described, *Kúdiyáttam*, *Mattavilasam* and *Parakkum Kúttu*, and they are described below.

Kúdiyáttam :—It is a performance in which there are two or more Chákkíyars whose costumes vary according to the characters in the puranic story whom they represent. The

1. Originally in British Malabar, but now in Irinjálakuda and Muzhikulam.

2. Originally in Vellarapilly, but now in Kottayam and Kitangur.

Nangiyar recites verses, and the Chákkiyar conveys their explanations in a dramatic style by means of dancing and gesticulations. The *Vidúshakān* (clown) orally explains the meanings of the verses and very clearly humours the audience. One of the Chákkiyars opens with an introduction to Sri Vásudéva (he who plays with Máya). By way of preface, he describes the six qualities, which a good speaker ought to possess during his performance, namely, (1) *Mádhuryam* (pleasant delivery), (2) *Aksharavyakti* (clearness of syllables), (3) *Padavyakti* (clearness of words), (4) *Laghutvam* (brevity in expounding), (5) *Swarāram* (sweet sounds) and (6) *Sthirata* (constancy). He first bows to the pot drum (*mizhāvu*), then to the audience and afterwards dances a queer dance for about a quarter of an hour humorously designated *Kákkakúl*, or crow legs, from the resemblance to the crow's fantastic movements. His face is painted in green or red colours.

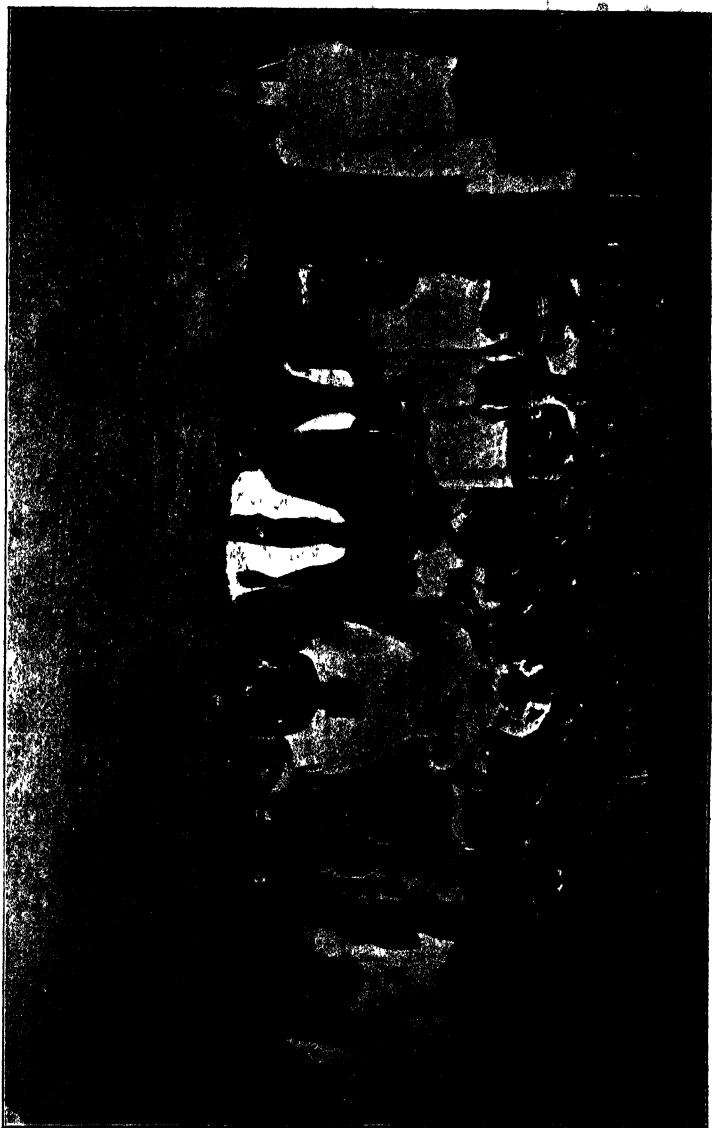
Mattavilásam :—It is a kind of performance in which a Nángiyar plays important part, and is generally acted in fulfilment of a vow taken by a woman for the blessing of a son.

Parakkum Kúttu (flying performance) :—This is described by Dr. Gundert as an exhibition of the figure of *Garuda* (brahminy kite) high in the air. A Cherakkal Raja was famous for this show in 1738. One of the rulers of Cochin had it performed at Kurikád in the last century. The famous poet Kalakattu Kunjan Nambiyar is said to have taken part in it. It is an expensive performance and only rulers can afford to have it acted.

Kúttús or performances are held in special buildings within the outer walls of temples, and among the audience only Brahmans are privileged to sit down, while the Sudras have to stand. All the time no one could either speak, offer any remarks or criticisms in the hall, lest the performance should cease; and this will, without any oral announcement, be made known to the audience by the removal of the head-gear (*muti*) by the Chakkiyar. An ordinary Chakkiyar sometimes takes much time for dressing, because of his inability to fascinate his audience by his discourse, whence the proverb "*Atá Chákkiyar aniyil pradhānam* (a dandy spends too much time for his toilette.)"

Páḍakam :—The name is generally applied to a kind of discourse by either the Ambalavasis or the members of other

CHAKKIYAR, NANGIYAR, AND NUMBIYAR WITH THE AUDIENCE AFTER THE PERFORMANCE



superior castes. The equipment of the performer is much simpler.

THE NAMBIYARS.

There are four classes of the *pūnūl*-wearing people to whom the term "Nambiyar" is applied, and they are—

1. Pushpakan or Pushpakan Nambiyar.
2. Thiyyāti Nambiyar.
3. Chakkiyar Nambiyar.
4. Chengazhi Nambiyar.

There is also a class of Nayar Nambiyars, so called because of their having been at one time the chiefs of territories.

1. *Pushpakan* or *Pushpakan Nambiyar*:—Regarding the origin of this sub-caste, the following traditions are extant. A Brahman had connection with his wife during the menstrual period, for which they were both put out of caste. Another story is that a Brahman who suspected his pregnant wife of criminal intimacy with another man had her out-casted. She gave birth to a female and died, but the latter was reared by Parasurama and in due course was married. She and her descendants were known as Pushpakans.¹

Their marriage customs are similar to those of the Brahmans, but their women (both those who are married and those who are widows) may enter into *sambandham* either with the Nambuthiris or with their own caste-men. But their women, who are called Pushpinis or Brahmanis, may, either during the life-time or after the death of their husbands, enter into *sambandham* with a Nambuthiri or even one of their caste-men. At the tali-tying ceremony of all castes from and above the high caste Nayers, these women are invited to sing songs chiefly puranic dealing with the marriage celebrations of Sita, Parvati, or Lakshmi. In Bhagavati temples they are employed to sing *Dārika Vadham*, and *Sumba* and *Nisumba Vadham*, i. e., songs relating to the death of the demons, namely, Darikan, Sumban, and Nisumban.

As among the Variyars, the Pushpakans follow both the matriarchal and patriarchal systems of inheritance. The birth and death pollutions last for eleven days. Their traditional occupation consists of sweeping the inner precincts of the temples, cleaning the utensils (*talikazhakam*) or collecting flowers and

making garlands (*málakashakam*). In this respect they are similar to the *Dámakarans* of the east coast temples.

Among the Pushpakans the males are styled Nambiyars, but the titled individuals are known as Nambissans or Mooses in some places, while in others Pushpakans or Unnis. The names 'Nambiyars' and 'Mooses' are confusive and vague, especially as the former is applied to six and the latter to seven of the sub-castes below the Brahmans. Further, the word 'Moos' is applied to the personal attendants of Nambuthiris, to the teachers in the art of warfare, and in former times was applied to some of the aristocratic families as well as to warriors of the Taliyathiris.

2. *Thiyyattu Unni* or *Thiyyáti Nambiyar* :—In Bhagavati temples, the Thiyyattu Unnis paint the image of the goddess in lively colours, while praising her in song and propitiating her with offerings, and particularly are their services requisitioned when small-pox prevails in any locality. They are considered to mitigate the wrath of the small-pox demon by certain ceremonies, and during that period the occupants vacate the houses, leaving the Thiyyattu Unni in sole charge. In the temples also they perform similar ceremonies for the welfare of the inhabitants of the stricken village. Probably, their degradation arises from work of this nature.¹

In the State they are better known as Thiyyati Nambiyars, drawers of the image of Ayyappan, painting him in lively colours in temples dedicated to him, singing songs in his praise and performing all manner of propitiating worship. They are wearers of the *púníl*, and, as among Nambuthiris, only the eldest son marries, while the junior members contract *sambandham* with Nayar women. Their girls undergo the tali-tying ceremony, and the bridegroom who ties the *tali* is a member of their own caste, and the consummation of the marriage does not take place until the night of the fourth day. If he wishes to have her as a wife, he takes her to his own house, and the children born of this union inherit the father's property. If, on the other hand, she is not taken as a wife, she resides with her own family, and consorts with a Brahman or a Kshatriya; the children of such union follow the inheritance in the female line. Among the Thiyyattu Unnis, the birth and



TWO PUSHPAKANS AND TWO PUSHPINIS.

death pollutions last for eleven days. Their own caste-men act as priests, while Brahmans officiate for the purificatory ceremonies. The number of this sub-caste is very limited, and only seven were returned at the last Census.

They follow their traditional occupation which is known as *Thiyyāttam* (fire-dancing or fire-walking) but which seldom takes place at the present time. It is only a kind of *pūja* performed in temples dedicated to Ayyappan generally during *Mandalam* (forty days from the 15th November to the 25th December), but also on certain auspicious days at the request of the votaries who defray expenses thereof. A small quadrangular edifice is made and covered with cloths or decorated with the green leaves of the the cocoanut palm. Beneath this is drawn the figure of the sylvan deity either on foot or mounted on a tiger, painted in a heterogeneous mixture of black, red, yellow, green, and white. At the corners of the edifice stand clean bell-metal lamps with cotton wicks soaked in cocoanut oil. At the head of the painting is a small stool on which reposes the image of Ayyappan. When the priest (*Sānthikkāran*) finishes the performance of the *pūja*, the Nambiyar begins his songs accompanying himself by rhythmic beats on his drum. At the end of his songs, he stands up and worships Ganapati, Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, and Saraswati and last but not least Ayyappan in a *tantric* form with the movement of his fingers and hands. He then takes a piece of cloth dipped in oil, and, with one end ablaze, goes round the edifice several times. This is called *Thiri ozhikkal* (going round with the burning wick). The last item of the *pūja* is the appearance of the *Velichapād* (oracle) on the spot, and he may be either himself or one of the Nayar caste. He works himself up to a state of frenzy and moves up and down destroying the edifice with a sword and wiping out the painted figure with his feet. At length, as one inspired, he speaks to the votaries proclaiming the deity's satisfaction or otherwise of the performance. He then goes on to break the cocoanuts sometimes numbering as many as 12,000.

Though the *pūja* is termed fire-walking or fire-dancing, this is but seldom performed. In cases where it is so intended, a cart-load or two of wood is burnt and the red hot ashes are strewn on the ground. Near to this, the priest of the temple

performs a *pūja* on a floral diagram (*padmam*) drawn on the ground. The part of *Velichapād* is played by the Nambiyar himself who, in the course of his inspired and unconscious movements, treads down the red hot ashes. This performance of the Nambiyars is totally dissimilar to the fire-walking in vogue among some of the Tamil castes both in the Chittur Taluk of the State and elsewhere. Among the latter, a pit is dug about 20 feet in length, 12 feet in breadth, 4 feet in depth. In this, several cart-loads of fuel are burned and reduced to glowing red hot ashes, over which the priest along with those under a vow walks up and down several times and escapes unhurt.

3. *Chakkiyar Nambiyar or Nambiyar proper* :—They too, like the Chakkiyars, are the offspring of unholy connections, but wear no sacred thread. Their women who are called Nāngiyars enter into *sambandham* with their caste-men, Chākkiyars, Thirumulpads, and Nambuthiris. The males take their wives either from their own caste or from the Sudras. The Nambiyars may sit with the Chākkiyars at meals, but a Nangiyan may not sit with an *Illōtamma*, for the women, as in other castes, are zealously orthodox. They follow the inheritance in the female line. They numbered seventy-two at the last Census. The great Malayalam poet, Kalakkattu Kunjan Nambiyar, was a member of this sub-caste.

In the *Kūdiyattam* performance, the Chakkiyar and the Nangiyan together appear on the stage. The Nangiyan also has her periodical performance called *Nangiyan-kūttu*. It is held for twelve days in Chingam (August-September) in Trichur, for twelve days in Médam (April-May) in Pazhayannur and for seven days in Kumbham (February-March) in Tiruvilvamala.

If an *Agnihotri Nambuthiri* dies in the neighbourhood, the local Nangiyan has to go to the cremation ground to perform what is called *Chudala-kūttu*.

The Nangiyan's wedding ornament is *pollattāli*; and the other ornaments for the neck are *enthram* and *kuzhal*.

4. *Chengazhi Nambiyar* :—The original habitat of this class of Nambiyars is in a village specially known as Chengazhi-kode, in the Talapilly Taluk. They have no temple service. The priests who officiate at their ceremonies are a class of non-Vedic Nambuthiris.



A THIYYADI NUMBIYAR AND HIS DRUMMER.

There are two families near Nelluvayi, the members of which are said to be the descendants of two old petty chiefs, and the sites of their hill-forts are still to be seen. Mullakkal Bhagavati is their patron deity.

The avarice and greed of these Nambiyars are proverbial. Some are cultivators.

The following story is ascribed to their origin. It is said that a Nambuthiri had three sons. One day, a merchant, with a view to test their honesty, entrusted them with a certain quantity of gold, and went to them after ten days to get it back, when one of them asked him why he came so late as to receive the copper they were entrusted with, while the other wished him to take back the piece of silver he had given them for safe keeping. The third son called him a thief. Their father who overheard this told him to take back what he had given. Fully aware of the dishonesty of his sons, the father called out the son who mentioned copper, and made him a Chengazhi Nambiyar, that is, a Nambiyar of Chengazhikode (a tract of country so called in central Talapilly). The son who spoke of silver was made Vellámthuruthu Nambiyar, while the third son became Pilápetta Nambiyar. Thus, the three Brahman youths for their dishonesty became the progenitors of the three classes of the Nambiyars.¹

THE VARIYARS.

The Variyars, an important community in the State, are more numerous than the members of other sub-castes of the Ambalavasis and are to be found in all parts of the State. Regarding their origin, there are as many as five different accounts, and the most accepted theory is that they are the descendants of a Brahman married to a Sudra wife. The term 'Variyar' is said to be a corrupt form of 'párasava,'² meaning the son of a Brahman duly wedded to a Sudra woman. According to another tradition, the word is derived from 'varijam,' one who has sprung from water. It is said that Parasurama, who induced Brahmans to colonise Kerala, directed the Sudras to do menial service for them. The former complained that the latter were unfit for temple service, because they were meat-eaters. Parasurama, thereupon, created out of water a new caste of people for temple service.

1. Mackenzie Manuscripts, 18th May 1819.

2. Mahabharata, Anusasana Parva, Chap 48, verse 5.

The statement here is somewhat figurative, and all that is meant by it is that they came out of water after a plunge bath, as an elaborate purificatory ceremony of a section of the Nayers for the temple service. A third derivation of the word 'Variyar' is from 'váruka,' which means to sweep. Of this again, two accounts are given; according to one, the Variyars are the sweepers of the inner court-yard of the temple; according to the other, a certain Súdra woman who was doing menial service in a temple was ordered by a Brahman employed there to sweep a bone probably dropped by a bird in its flight.¹ She did so, but was, for this, out-casted by her own people. The Brahmans, however, allowed her to continue the service in the temple, and even made no objection to herself and her descendants consorting with Brahmans. Thus, there arose the sub-caste of Variyars. The fifth and the last account as given in the *Bhúgóla-puranam* is, that a certain old Brahman married a young girl. Wishing for a child, she began her devotions to the local deity, one portion of which was the preparation of a flower-garland every day for the village God. In due course, the prayer of the girl was granted, and she conceived. The old husband suspecting her of infidelity discarded her, and her flower-garland was no longer acceptable. She was however resolute in her devotion and placed her garland on the steps leading to the shrine, mentally offering it for the wearing of the God. The garland, however, was seen on the person of the God's image, day after day, and this miracle attracted the notice of the villagers, who readily believed that her conception was the result of the God's blessing. She was not, however, re-admitted into her community, and a separate caste was thus started, known as Variyar with the occupation of making garlands, and rendering services of a similar nature in temples. Her children were supported by Azhuvancheri Thampurákkal, who accommodated them in his *patipura* or gate-house. She and her descendants were henceforth known as *Patipura Váriyar*, and one of this caste acts as the trusted attendant of this famous royal priest. There are, it is said, eight subdivisions among the Variyars, but they do not appear to exist in the Státe; they are known only by their generic name.

1. Travancore Manual, pages 338-339; Kerala Visésa Mahatmyam, page 53.



A VARIAR WITH NIVEDIUM (SACRIFICIAL RICE) IN A BELL METAL
VESSEL (URULI) AND TWO VARABSIARS.

The Variyars resemble the Pisharotis in many respects. They are Sivites as the others are Vaishnavites; and the names of the former are those of Siva, while the latter go by Vaishnavite appellations. They have no *Upanayanam* and do not therefore wear the sacred thread. There is a ceremony called *Sivadeeksha* at the age of sixteen or earlier which alone qualifies them to be a *grihasta*. The young Variyar dresses himself in the orthodox Brahmanical fashion and is decked with Sivite marks of *vibhūti* (holy ashes) and *rudrāksha* when he goes like a *Brahmachari* for alms (*bhiksha*), and walks seven steps in the northern direction as a Kshatriya on a pilgrimage to Benares.

A Variyar can marry a woman of his own caste (*Kudivekkuka*) or form a *sambandham* with her or with a Nayar girl. A Variyar girl may marry either before or after puberty. The bridegroom who is also the *táli-tier* is a young man of her caste *enangu*. The ceremonies connected with it are somewhat similar to those of the Brahmans at the same time as the *táli-tying*. Along with the *táli-tying*, *lajahóman*, *pánigrahanam*, and *saptapati* have also to be performed. No *vedic* mantrams are uttered, but their translations in Sanskrit are given to be recited. In a room specially decorated, the girl remains for four days, holding in her hand a bell-metal mirror given her by her mother. The other formalities during the next three days are similar to those of the Pisharotis. The consummation takes place on the night of the fourth day after the performance of *Nándimukha* and a *púja* to Ganapati. There is only a pretence of cohabitation, and the married couple have soon to come out, bathe, and drink *punyáham* (sanctified water) which is considered to relieve them of the impurities arising from their supposed cohabitation. Then they dine together. The bridegroom can keep her as a wife, or the young woman may consort with a Brahman, Kshatriya, or one of her own castemen. No ceremony is performed for a woman about to become a mother. She may have *bhajanam* (adoration of a deity) in the local temple and take *panchagavyam* with some medicinal preparation for the safe delivery and health of the child. Soon after delivery the mother and the baby are bathed. The former bathes also on the fourth, seventh, tenth, and twelfth day, after which she is free from pollution by taking consecrated water from the Brahman priest. The ceremony

of naming and feeding the child, and tonsure is similar to that in vogue among other high caste-men.

When a Variyar girl comes of age, the event is announced to the caste-men of the neighbourhood by a kind of loud shouts (*vāikurava*). An *enanga* young woman rubs her body with gingelly oil, bathes her and then seats her in a separate room, on a dark coloured blanket (*karimpatam*), surrounded by a line of paddy to indicate that the space within is impure or polluted. In her hand is given a bell-metal mirror (*val kannūti*) without which she cannot stir out for any purpose. In the same room are kept a measure of paddy and rice and a lighted bell-metal lamp (നീലപിണ്ഡം). She is dressed in a double cloth (*enapudava*). Presents of betel leaves, nuts, cocoanuts and clothes are received from friends and relatives.

On the third day there is a luncheon of milk pudding (*pāl kanji*, rice boiled in milk) to the friends and relatives who are invited. The walls of the *vatakkini* (northern hall) are painted with pictures of the ornaments of the girl. A lighted lamp and *ashtamangallyam* are also placed there in a metal plate.

The girl is purified by a bath on the morning of the fourth day. With a song to Ganapati, the girl is assisted while bathing, by a Chithiyan girl who places in her hand and other parts of the body, some rice, turmeric powder and oil. A bark of a plantain tree shaped in the form of a triangle, with lighted torches stuck into the sides, is waved round her body, as she plunges into the water. This is done either to avert the potency of evil-eye, or to set her free from demoniacal influences if any. After the bath, the girl, dressed and decked out in her best and accompanied by a procession of young girls who are mostly her friends and relatives, returns home, with the matrons holding hanging lamps (*thúkkūvilakku*) and the vessel containing *ashtamangallyam* in front of her. There is then a grand feast to the friends and relatives of the family who are invited.

After a similar plunge-bath on the morning of the fifth day, the girl is again purified by a dose of sanctified water (*punyāham*) given by a Nambuthiri Brahman. She can then mingle with the rest of her family.

The Variyars generally follow inheritance in the female line. There is also a combined system of inheritance. Where a Variyar forms a *sambandham* with a woman of his own caste, the children follow the mother, and the inheritance is in the female line. If, however, after *sambandham*, the woman resides with the husband in his house, and there she has children, these children inherit their father's property. If a woman, taken to her husband's house, has children, then becomes a widow, and marries another, the children by the second husband also inherit the property of the first husband's family. If, in a family, the brother marries and brings his wife to live with him while his married sister is not taken away by her husband but left in her own family and there visited by him, the children of the brother and sister inherit the property in equal shares; the children of the man cannot claim any property belonging to the maternal line, and the woman's children can claim no property from their father or his family. The custom is much in vogue in Travancore; but in this State only one instance has come under my notice in the course of my investigations.

The Variyars are Sivites in religion. Their dead bodies are burned with the fire obtained from a *hōmam* (sacred fire) performed on the cremation ground in the southern part of their compounds. The chief mourner is the nephew and in some cases the son also acts that part. The pollution is for twelve days, and on the thirteenth day, the agnates bathe early in the morning, take *punyāham*, and thus become free from pollution. Then he makes the rice-ball offerings to the spirit of the departed, and performs the *śrāddha* both for their parents and their uncles. Offerings are also made to the deceased whom they believe to be the servants of Siva and a member of the *gōtra* of Kailasa. In the *Keralotpathi*, the Variyars are referred to as *Kailasa-vāsīs* or dwellers in *Mount Kailas*.

Members of this caste follow the occupation of temple servants. Some are rich land-owners occupying high social position, while others are skilled in astrology, and like the Pisharotis, are learned in Sanskrit. Many receive advanced western education and enter the lists of the learned professions. The majority, however, of the Variyars are comparatively poor and live a hand-to-mouth existence; nevertheless, their daily needs are insured to them for life by their service

(*kazhakam*) in temples—a service which is of two kinds, *māla-kazhakam* (garland making), and *talikazhakam* (sweeping). In most cases, the temple priest (an Embran or a Nambuthiri) is the husband of one of the girls in the family, and the proverb that 'the Embran priest provides the lamp for the Variyar's supper' is indicative of the latter's dependence on the former; but, on the whole, this caste is perhaps the most progressive among the Ambalavasis.

The house of a Variyar is styled *variyaṁ*, and the women are called *Varisars*. This caste at the last Census numbered 2,209.

THE PISHAROTIS.

The origin of this sub-caste is somewhat interesting. A Brahman, wishing to become a *sanyāsi* or ascetic, removed the *pūñil* from his person. But probably alarmed at the austerity of an ascetic's life, he changed his mind before the irrevocable step had been taken, and elected to return to the life of a *grihasta* (house-holder) by marrying a Variyar woman. He was called a *Pishara*—as one who on the threshold of renouncing the worldly pleasures had elected to return to its pitfalls, its passions and its strifes—and he and his descendants were henceforth known as Pisharotis. According to another tradition, they are said to have been temple servants during the Budhistic period, and their puzzling position among the Malabar castes, half monk and half layman, does not justify the fanciful origin given above.¹

No *Upanayanam* ceremony (the ceremony of investiture of the holy thread) is performed for the Pisharoti youngsters, as their original ancestor had relinquished it. In place of it, however, they are initiated into a *Vaishnavite mantram* called *Ashtākshara*. A consecrated pot of water is poured over the lad's head (*kalasam oshikkuka*) as a preparatory sacrament. Then, dressed in the *thattu* form (orthodox religious costume in Malabar which the high class of Nambuthiris and Kshatriyas wear on ceremonial occasions), he makes a pretence of going on a pilgrimage to Benares, which corresponds to the termination of *Brahmacharya* stage. It is only after this ceremony that he can marry. A Pisharoti may enter into conjugal relations with a woman of his own caste or a Nayar

1. Travancore Census Report, page 264. Kerala Avakasa Kramam Travancore Manual, page 337.



THREE PISHARODI WOMEN.

woman. The Pisharoti girls are married either before or after puberty. The tali-tying ceremony is performed by a young man of the same caste. *Pānigrahanam* or taking of the bride's hand in that of the bridegroom is the binding portion of the ceremony, and the *hómam* (offering to the sacred fire) is also made by the bridegroom. An essential part of the ceremony is the planting of a jasmine shoot in a room, specially decorated for the purpose, in which the bride remains for four days holding in her hand a mirror (*vál kannúti*) given her by her mother. In the mornings and evenings, the bride and bridegroom are placed side by side, while Pisharasyars wave about their faces a metal plate filled with rice and two halves of a cocoanut containing oil and lighted cotton wicks. The consummation takes place on the night of the fourth day, as among the Nambuthiris. It is left to the choice of the *táli-tier* to keep the woman as his wife, and, if he elects to do so, must provide her with clothes and other necessities of life except food. If he does not choose to do so, she is at liberty to consort with a Brahman or a Kshatriya.

In general, they observe the matriarchal system of inheritance. Invariably they take to themselves names of Vishnu or Lakshmi in one of their many manifestations, and no Pisharoti will ever serve in a Sivite temple. To a certain extent they are serpent worshippers, for on *Ayillyam* day in the month of Kanni (September-October) Brahmans make offerings (*sarpa bali*) to snakes in Pisharoti compounds, as in other Sudra compounds as ordained by Parasurama.

The funeral customs of the Pisharotis are very similar to those of *sanyásis*. A pit is dug and partly filled with salt, sand and ashes; in it the dead body is placed in a sitting posture and a hymn is sung which means 'may water go with water, air with air'; 'may this *Panchabhúta sarira* (body made up of the five elements) resolve itself into its component parts in nature.'

As in the case of a *sanyási*, who is a *Jeevan muktha* or one liberated from bondage of the flesh in the living body, so a Pisharoti is believed to have no subtle body and hence to require no offerings after death. A few offerings are however made, but they are more as a prayerful memory than for the soul of the departed. Pollution is observed for twelve days.

On the eleventh day, a ceremony corresponding to the *Ekdista Sradha* of the Brahmans is performed. A knotted piece of *kusa* grass representing the departed soul is taken to a temple near at hand, where a lighted lamp symbolical of Vishnu is worshipped, and prayers are offered up by the Brahmans, for the absorption of the departed soul in Vishnú's divine substance. This ceremony is repeated at the end of every year. There is also a commemorative rite every year on the day of asterism of death. For these and other ceremonials, the priests are their own caste-men.

The traditional occupation of the caste-men is the preparation of flower garlands for Vishnu temples. There are some good Sanskrit scholars among them, and they are hereditarily employed as *asáns* or tutors in aristocratic families. They are so very conservative that they seldom dine out, and, if perchance they do so eat, it is only from the hands of the Brahmans, Kshatriyas or Muttatus. Variyars and Pisharotis interdine, but they allow no intermarriage, nor do they take part in each other's ceremonies. At the last Census they numbered 1190.

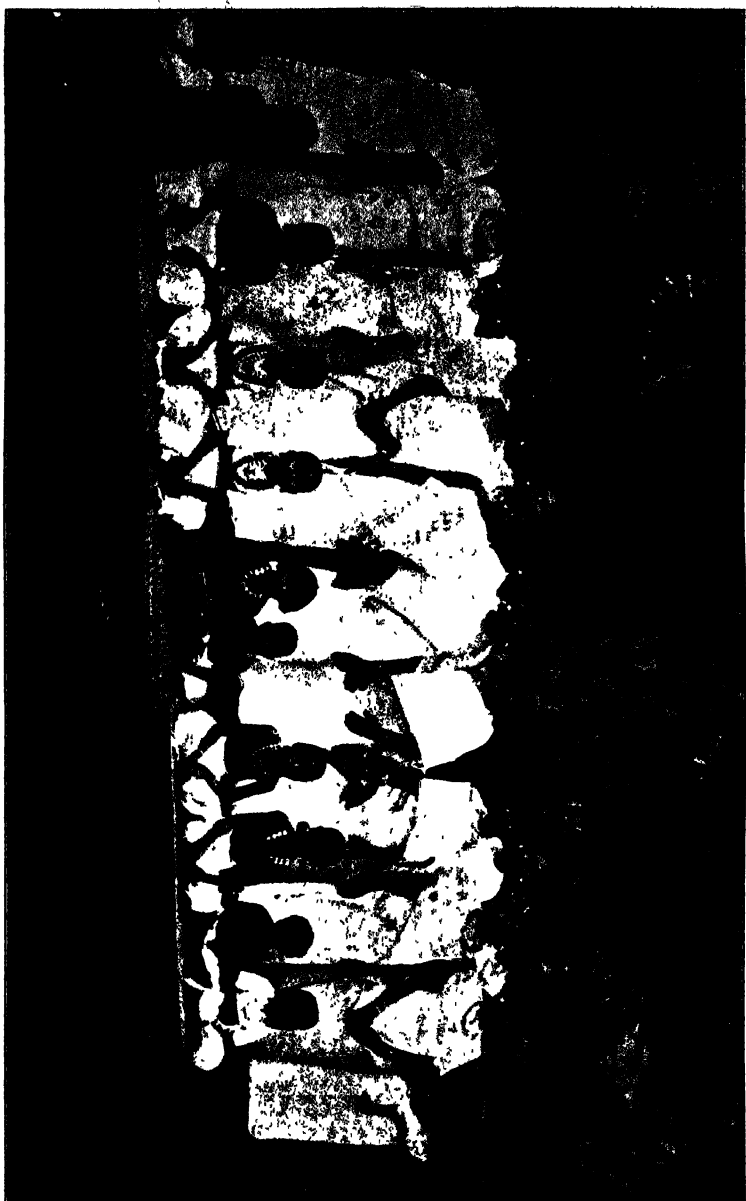
THE POTHUVALS.

The word 'Pothuval' means a common person or general servant, and is applied to two sections of the caste having widely different functions—*Mála Pothuváls* (garland makers), and *Chenda Pothuváls* (drummers). The caste is believed to have sprung from a Brahman's connection with a Sudra woman. The caste-men are like the Nayars in many respects, and are generally employed in temples as keepers of stores of a miscellaneous nature. It is said that, at Irinjalakuda, a Pothuval alone can shave the Thachudaya Kaimal on installation. His family has a perpetual hereditary allowance therefor from the pagoda. Their birth and death pollutions last for twelve days.¹ They do not interdine with the Pisharotis and Variyars. They numbered 366 at the last Census.

THE MÁRARS.

The Márars are said to be Sudras and rightly to be classed among the Nayars; but owing perhaps to their close connection with the temple services and the absence of inter-dining and inter-marriage with the Nayars, they are classed

1. Cochin Census Report, 1901, page 149. The caste-men in some places curiously observe pollution for 13, 15, and 18 days respectively. (Kerala Vishesha Mahatmyam, page 54).



A GROUP OF POTHUVARISARS.

as a sub-caste of the Ambalavasis. They are generally drummers, musicians, and store-keepers in temples. Like the Thiyyāti Nambiyars, some among them draw the figure of the Goddess in Bhagavati temples and sing songs in her praise; these are known as Kurups. Their customs in connection with the tali-tying ceremony, *sambandham*, inheritance, and pollution, are precisely similar to those of the Nayars; but the tali-tying is generally performed by Thirumulpads in the southern and by their caste-men (*enangans*) in the northern Taluks of the State. The Brahmans, Kshatriyas, or they themselves form *sambandhams* with the Marar women. Their own caste-men act as priests for funeral and other ceremonies. The period of pollution observed by the caste-men is fifteen days, and this as well as the undeniable facts that a Nambuthiri can neither cook his meals nor eat in a Marar's house, that their women are called Ammas and not Marasiyars, that they have no *punyaham* at the hands of the Nambuthiris, and the custom of nose-boring among females, etc., all seem to show that they belong to the Sudras, rather than to the Ambalavasis. There are two minor subdivisions among the Marars, the members of one of which, having temple service, profess superiority to those of the other, and are the Ambalavasis. The former are called *Chenda Puthuváls* in some places, while the latter render the services of the *Cheetayans* in the houses of the Nambuthiris and in those of their *Atiyals* who are the Nayars of the Sudra division.

There is, about the famous temple at Vaikam, in North Travancore, a tradition, that, once upon a time, there survived only a female member in a Marar's family for the drum-beating service. The manager thereof wished to deprive her of her daily perquisite (boiled rice), because no woman could by custom perform this service. The usual *Utsavam* (feast) was then going on, and she could not perform the Marar's work. She was deeply aggrieved at this, but had a vision to bathe and do her duties in the temple, as before, though against the orders of the manager, who also had a similar vision to allow her to do her usual work. Accordingly, she discharged her duties satisfactorily, during *Sri Bhuta bali* (offerings to the *Bhútas* or elementals), when they were all visible in a body with gaping mouths to eat up the sacrificial offerings which were thrown on the floor by the high priest (*tantri*) who was much threatened

by them. Meanwhile, Bhadrakali Mattapally Nambuthiri, a *tantri* of a village near Angamali, was then passing along the back-water. He was aware of the incident in the temple and promised to appease the wrath of the elementals, if he were given a share in the rites of the temple. There was no alternative, the old *tantri* had to yield. All were set right. Henceforth, there have been two *tantries*, and the Marar's family afterwards prospered and still continues the service in the temple.

It is said that a Tamil tribe called 'Máranmár' founded the Pandiyan kingdom, and 'Maran' was a title of their kings.

One section of the Marars at Trichur allege that they were brought to Kerala by Parasurama and were given special honours and privileges. A few members of these families escort the flower garlands from the flower garden *Pullithámmam* to the temple. Until recently, the Devaswam used to give a small quantity of paddy for the tali-tying ceremony of every girl in these families, and a measure of cocoanut oil during the *Sivarathri* festival.

THE SAMANTHANS.

The word 'Sámanthan' is a generic name for a group of castes which form the aristocracy of Malabar, formerly ruling over varying extents of territories. With regard to the origin of this caste, it is said that they are the descendants of the Kshatriyas, who, divesting themselves of the *púníl* (holy thread), fled from the wrath of Parasurama, and lived in jungles without the performance of *sandhyá-vandanam* and other prayers; whence they were known as Sámanthans or those without *mantrams*. This story, says Mr. H. A. Stuart, is supported neither by philology nor by anything else. There is also a tradition that the great Cheraman Perumal had married a woman of the Samanathan caste, and had several sons and daughters. His daughters by the legitimate wife were allowed to enter into wedlock with the Brahmans, while those of the Samantha wife formed matrimonial alliances with the then rulers of territories, and the first son by the Samantha woman and his nephews became the Zamorins of Calicut.¹

There is some reason to suppose that the Samanthans are really Nayars, and that their claim to the higher rank is of recent date; that such recruitments are going on is indicated by the difference between the number of persons returned as

1. Kerala Ayakass Kramam, paragraphs 33-36.



A GROUP OF MARARS WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

Samanthans in the Malabar Censuses of 1901 and 1891 (4351; 1225 respectively), a difference which is far above the normal increase of population.¹ They are generally said to be higher in the social scale, and yet their customs closely resemble those of the Nayars.²

There are several minor divisions among the Samanthans, namely, (a) Nambiyar, Unithiri, Adiyōdi, all belonging to North Malabar, and (b) Nedun-gadi, Vellodi, Eradi, Thirumulpad, belonging to South Malabar. In the last Census of the Cochin State, only one Unithiri and fifty Adiyōdis were found as living in the State.

The marriage customs of the Samanthans are similar to those in vogue among the Kshatriyas as already described. The bridegrooms who tie the *tāli* round the necks of the Samantha girls are generally Kshatriyas; but Thirumulpads generally act as such for the weddings of girls of poor families; while the members of the Cranganur Chief's family act as bridegrooms in the *kōvilakams* of Calicut.

Their women form *sambandham* alliance with Vedic Nambuthiri Brahmans or Kshatriyas, while the males generally form *sambandham* with Nayar women. No *Seemantham* or *Pumsavanam* ceremonies are performed for women who are about to become mothers; but they perform the *Pulikudi* ceremony of the Nayars. All ceremonies among the Samanthans are performed without *mantrams* and are similar to those of the Brahmans and Kshatriyas who observe *Boudhayana Sūtras*. Nambuthiris act as priests for all ceremonies performed from birth to death of the Samanthan (male and female). Their birth and death pollutions last for eleven days. They have, as a rule, fifteen days' pollution.

With regard to their social status, there is some dispute; some claim to be a little above the Nayars, while others among the caste-men claim to be ranked below the Kshatriyas on the following grounds:—(a) they are forbidden to eat meat; (b) the Brahman priests who officiate at the purificatory ceremonies in their houses, which are purified by the sanctified water, need not subsequently bathe; (c) they perform the funeral oblations on the *darbha* grass, like the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas;

1. Malabar Gazetteer, page 113.

2. Madras Census Report, 1891.

(d) as soon as the Samanthans are freed from pollution by *punyáham* (sanctified water), they can enter the temples; (e) they are privileged to eat with the *Adhyan Nambuthiris* in the same room, though not in the same row; (f) high class Nambuthiri Brahmans need not bathe when they receive gifts from them in hands; (g) *pújas* to deities are performed in their houses; (h) high class Brahmans need not bathe after entering their houses, and they eat the food prepared by the Brahmans for the *Srádha* ceremonies in their houses; (i) the caste-men bathe at the touch of the Sudras, and these customs are in vogue among the members of the aristocratic families in Malabar. However, it is said that Samanthans and Ambalavasis do not interdine, but at public feasts they may sit together: nor will Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Nambidis and most of the Ambalavasis take water from them.¹ The chief occupation of the caste-men in Malabar is the personal attendance on the members of the Zamorin and his relations.

Houses of this caste are called *madams*, but those of the aristocracy are known as *kóvilakams*. Some Samanthans have the caste titles of *Kartháru* and *Kaimal*. The difference between the various classes of Samanthan is almost due to their relative wealth and influence.²

Their women wear the special ornaments, viz., *cherutháli*, *entram*, and *kuzhal*.

From the foregoing account of the customs and manners of the Antharálars, it is seen that they come under two distinct communities, in which the wearing of the *púníl* or the sacred thread marks the difference between them. The members of the thread-wearing subdivision were originally Brahmans, but were degraded perhaps for some fault of their ancestors. It is equally possible that their degradation may have been due to the special avocations pursued by them. The Brahmanic customs and manners which they profess to observe are less rigid than in the case of Brahmans, yet they cannot deviate from them. The ceremonial forms of the Brahman marriage are in vogue among them, but the bridegroom or the *tali-tier* is seldom the husband of the girl; and hence the *sambandham* form of marital relations, preferably with Brahmans, and less so with the Kshatriyas, is also allowed.

Conclusion

¹, Cochin Census Report, page 158.

², Malabar Gazetteer, page 150.

This alternative form of conjugal relationship is to some extent owing to the difficulty of securing suitable husbands within their own sub-castes, for the men with their small openings prefer *sambandham* union so as to be free from the responsibility of supporting the children : and this dual form of marital relationship has given rise to a dual form of inheritance.

It is curious to note that, while the population in almost every caste of the State has increased during the ten years, from 1891 to 1901, there is a marked diminution among the Nambidis, Adikals, and Pushpakans. The explanation of this may be gathered from the facts that some of their women are married at a comparatively advanced age, and others prefer to remain widows after the death of their husbands.

The members of the other subdivisions, who do not wear the *púnú*, were probably recruited from the Sudras for temple service, and are below in status to those mentioned above. Of late years, they have been observing the customs and manners of those above them, and are showing considerable signs of elevation in all respects. The social status of each of the subdivisions in the two communities cannot be accurately defined. In the course of my investigations, I found that the members of each subdivision asserted their superiority to those of the others. Each subdivision is in fact an endogamous sect. The Antharálars form in fact a hybrid caste, and ethnologically, the thread-wearing members of the first community are more Aryan than the members of the second.

The following Sanskrit and Malayalam works are consulted in the preparation of my notes on the Antharálajátis :—

(1) *Keralamahátmyam*, (2) *Keralavisheshamahátmyam*, (3) *Keralólpathi* by Dr. Gundert, (4) *Keralólpathi* republished from *Vinódamálíka*, (5) Articles in *Rasika Ranjini*, *Mangalodayam*, *Keralapathrika* and *Manórama*, (6) Occasional notes in the *Madras Dailies* and (7) *Keralavilasam* by the present Eralpad Raja. It may not be out of place here to make a few remarks on the most popular work called also *Bhugóla Puranam* which deals with the Malayali castes of Kerala. This Sanskrit work of 104 chapters is in poetry in the *Anushtup* metre, and is said to have been narrated by the sage Garga to Yudhishtira. Though the Malayalis consider it as a sacred work, it is but a poor production believed, at most, to be not more than two hundred

years old. The style is slipshod and contains many anachronisms. A Malayalam translation has recently been published in Travancore. Mr. Fawcett has roughly handled this work in the Madras Museum Bulletin on the Nambuthiris. There is also another work of the same name in the Palghat Taluk, dealing with pagodas, and four alone of the numerous castes. There is yet another work (not printed) attributed to the famous Vilwamangalathu Swamiyar. The last two are pseudonymous publications.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KSHATRIYAS.

The caste of Malayali Kshatriyas in Cochin comprises only a few families, some of which are subdivided into smaller branches and are closely related to one another. Among them are included the members of the family of His Highness the Raja, the members of the family of the Chief of Cranganur and others called Thambans and Thirumulpads. The principal Thamban families are related to the ruling families, and are superior in social status to those of the Thirumulpads. The princes of the first two families possess the title of Thamburan and the princesses that of Thamburattis. The women of the Thirumulpads are known as Nanibashtathiris. These are mere distinct names borne by the members of the caste.

The caste may be described according to the *Sastras*, as a *Sankara* or hybrid caste originating from the sexual connection of the Brahmans with Kshatriya women. Hence it is also known by another name 'Murdhavasikthaka.'

The *Sástras* deny *gótra* (descent from the Vedic Rishis) to the Kshatriyas who are, it is ordained, to adopt that of their *puróhīts* (family priests). According to this doctrine, all the Kshatriyas belong to the same *gótra* (*Viswámitra gótra*) and therefore regular or *Sástraic* inter-marriage is prohibited among them. The Rajas of Kottayam are followers of *Bhrigu-Viswamitra gótra*. There is in Travancore one Kshatriya family, which follows the *Bhārgava gótra*, viz., the family of the titular Raja of Pantalám, and yet *Sástraic* or regular inter-marriage between this and any other Kshatriya family of *Viswamitra gótra* is not allowed; nor is there any tradition about its prevalence at any time.

The Kshatriya girls are married both before and after puberty. There are two forms of marriage, in vogue among them as among the Nayars, one of which is the formal or ceremonial form, and is generally

Marriage customs.

called the *tālī*-tying ceremony (*Tālikettu Kolyanam*, or *Trittalī Chārthu* or *Veli* in royal families), and the other, which is the real form of conjugal relationship, is known as *sambandham* (a union terminable at the will of either party). The ceremony for the former, as among the Brahmans, is performed in accordance with the *Grihya Sūtras*, when a girl is between ten and thirteen years of age, and this is immediately followed by the nuptials (*Vivāhasēsha*). The bridegroom for this is chosen only from two classes of Brahmans, *viz.*, the Nambuthiris and the Arya Pattars; but in the royal family of Cochin, and in others related to it, only the former is allowed. The bridegroom receives a fee (*varadakshina*) for his services and is allowed to depart after four days, during which various ceremonies are performed and formalities gone through. The same Brahman can act as a pseudo-bridegroom for other girls in the same family or in other families, but can tie the *tālī* for only one girl at a time.

In this connection it must be said that marriage is performed according to the *charana* of the tribe, and no regard is paid to the *gōtra*, *sūtra* (precept), or *charana* of the bridegroom elect, nor are their horoscopes consulted prior to the ceremony. The marriage is concluded on the fourth day, but *Oupāsana* (worship of domestic fire) and *Vaiswadēva* (worship of certain gods) are to be continued until the formal nuptials are over, which may be on the same (fourth) night or afterwards.

The *tālī*-tying is not the real marriage, *i. e.*, the beginning of the girl's true conjugal relationship. It is, at the most, a licensing ceremony, that is to say, it gives her a title or certificate of fitness to contract conjugal partnership. It is therefore a ceremony that must necessarily be gone through before her real marriage or *sambandham* with a partner chosen from one of the four classes of Brahmans, namely, Nambuthiris, Arya Pattars, Pattars or east coast Brahmans, or the Brahmans of Canara or from her own caste people not related by *pula* or pollution. In the Kshatriya houses of noble ancestry, none but the Nambuthiri Brahmans are allowed to contract *sambandham* marriage with the ladies.

The real marriage or *sambandham* is attended with few or no formalities worth mentioning, and whatever formalities there are, are not absolutely essential. Far from being a public ceremony at which all the members of the household, irrespective of sex, attend, it

is a union formed secretly in the calm silence of the night in the maiden's bed-chamber. The only witnesses to the marriage are the senior female members of the family, together with their real husbands, and perhaps a few intimate friends to certify to the marriage and to congratulate them. Though the opinion of the head of the house (*kāranavan*) and other leading members is ascertained and their approval obtained before it is settled, none of these or any other male member of the house witnesses it, nor do they take open notice of it. Thus, the *sambandham* arrangements are a woman's affair carefully watched and controlled by the male members, who are responsible for the proper management of the *tarawad* (family) and the guarding of its prestige and traditions and who treat these *sambandham* arrangements as open family secrets. Yet the husbands of the women and the wives and children of the male members are accorded preferential treatment in the house.

The *sambandham* union is, as has been said above, attended with no religious ceremonies and with no legal formalities. Hence, it is free from those two liabilities, and is terminable at the will of either party. Adultery on the part of the women generally results in divorce, but is an offence that can be atoned for or condoned. Divorce and union with another suitable partner, and reconciliation and re-union with the same are not uncommon. One woman having two real husbands at a time, recognised by the family, is very rare indeed; and it is equally rare to find a man with more than one wife at a time. These are, of course, vestiges of polyandry and polygamy, and the general movement everywhere is towards making *sambandham* more binding on the parties contracting and towards attaching to it all the rights and liabilities of a true marriage.

Thus, the woman has two forms of marriage, namely, one formal or ceremonial, *i. e.*, the tali-tying, and the other real; and, as a general rule, has two husbands likewise, one nominal or conventional and the other real; but this does not necessarily always follow, for the same man may be chosen for both the marriages. The sacred book only recognises the nominal as her husband, though the couple, as a rule, do not really cohabit together even once after the ceremony is over; and conjugal fidelity not being so strictly enforced, as in the case of the Brahman caste, she is allowed to consort with

others who are not inferior to her in caste. Thus, on the death of her nominal husband, she and her sons (born, of course, of her union with real husbands) have to observe pollution, offer funeral oblations and cakes, and perform *Srúdhās* on anniversary days as to a legal husband and father.

The males too, like the girls, may be said to have two marriages—formal and real—with this important difference, namely, that unlike the tali-tying in girls, no such preliminary marriage is obligatory in the case of males and that it occurs only if he is invited or chosen as a bridegroom (*manavālan*) to perform the *tālikettu* (or the formal marriage ceremony) in a Nayar and Sāmantha house. He can tie the *tāli* or marriage badge round the necks of more than one girl on each occasion; and the ceremony in itself is not the vedic one prescribed in the *Grihya Sūtras*. Their real marriage is *sambandham* or free union on *Anulōma* principle, that is, with their caste-women (not related by *pula*) or women of certain inferior castes not below Nayars, namely, Nambidis, Sāmanthans, Ambalavāsīs, or Nayars. This is performed neither generally nor necessarily, but more often independently and secretly without the knowledge of his *tarawād* members.

There is no hard and fast line defining the extent to which a woman derives support from her husband or the extent to which a member of the other sex is bound to contribute towards the expenses of his wife and children. This matter is more or less governed by considerations of tradition and circumstances in the house of the woman.

Before passing on to the subject of inheritance, a word or two may be said about the social intercourse between the male and female sections of the Kshatriya houses of common ancestry connected by *pula* relationship. This is more or less restricted by certain rules, the object of which appears to be to prevent incest. Love affairs are, as a whole, a topic which they always avoid in conversation. Interviews between a grown-up male member of a household and a female member junior to him (e. g., younger sister, cousin, or niece) are less frequent and free than those between him and one of his senior lady relatives. However, on festive occasions, both sexes gather and take their meals together in a common mess-room.

In the matter of inheritance, the method of reckoning kinship is an important factor. If it is reckoned through the female line, the descent is matrilineal. This condition prevails in the Kshatriya families,

Inheritance.

each of which is, therefore, a matriarchate group of persons, of whom the eldest male member, called the *kāranavan*, manages the household according to the customary law of *marumakkathāyam*.¹ The typical household may be conceived as consisting of a *kāranavan*, his mother, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters born to the latter, and children born to their daughters, and so on.

If, as the family increases, it becomes unwieldy and difficult to manage, then, with the consent of all parties, divisions take place into several collateral branches, each of which establishes itself as a separate matriarchate household. This division affects only the property and not the relation of the *pula*, that is to say, it does not affect birth and death pollutions which is the sure sign of a common ancestry. The conventional as well as the real husbands of the women of the above described household may be each a follower of the Hindu law; yet she and her children born of the union with the latter have no claim to the property nor a recognised place in the family of either.

Of these, there are two classes, namely, (1) those that are Domestic ceremonies. *Sastraic* including the *samskāras* or sacraments, which are the post-natal and other ceremonies, and (2) others that have nothing but local usages or customs and family traditions to regulate them. The former are performed according to the *Aswalāyana* school of *Grihya Sūtras*, and it is therefore enough to note only their special features when performed in the Kshatriya houses. The latter, though not peculiar to this caste, seem to deserve a more detailed reference, as these may probably throw more light on the earlier state, not only of the Kshatriyas but also of other castes of Malabar.

The ceremonies of *Pumsavana* (male production) and Ante-natal ceremonies. *Seemantha* (hair parting) are performed in the third and fourth months respectively during the period of pregnancy.

On the twelfth day after the birth of a child (for the birth Post-natal ceremonies. pollution lasts for eleven days), the *Jāthakarṇa* (birth ceremony) is performed, and a secret name is given to the baby.

1. Right of sister's sons to inherit as contrasted with *makkathayam*, right of sons to inherit.

Next comes the *Námakarana* or name-giving ceremony. The names of males end in the suffix 'Varma' and those of females end in 'Dévi'. The names in common use among the male members of the caste are, Rama Varma, Ravi Varma, Kerala Varma, and Goda Varma; while those among the females are Amba Dévi, Ambika Dévi, Ambalika Dévi, and Subhadra Dévi.

There are also pet names or names used in conversing among themselves or for every day purposes. The names of the males that are in vogue are Kochunni, Kunjunni, Kochanujan, Kunjikidávu, Kunjan, Kómar, and those of the females, Kavú, Ikkavú, Kunjipilla, Manku, Ikku, and Kunji. It must be mentioned here that in ceremonies performed for women, *Nándeemukha* is not attended with the recitation of any specific formula, but only with that common to all 'gifts', namely, "*Om Tat Sat*".

Next come generally together on the same day, in the sixth month or afterwards, the ceremonies of first taking the child out through a door of the house, *Nishkramana*, and the first rice meal, *Anna prášana*.

For the third year are ordained the two ceremonies, (1) perforation of the ears (*Karnavédha*), and (2) initiation in reading and writing (*Vidyárambha*), but the latter generally takes place in the fifth year and the former still later—in the ninth year. The ears are pierced with the thorn of a tree called in Malayalam *vaiyankathavu* or *valankathuku* (*Hacourtia Sapida*). The girls have their ear-lobes much more distended than boys, and to distend lobes and to maintain them distended and also perhaps for use as ear-ornaments, they wear, besides other things, circular wooden discs. Of these, one variety, discoid in form, with two sides slightly convex, seems to be similar in shape to the Masai ear-rings of stone, described and illustrated in "Man, February 1905."

Tonsure of the head (*Choula*) is performed in the fifth or a little later in the case of girls, but in the case of boys it takes place along with, but always before, *Upanayanam* (the ceremony of investiture with the holy thread), called on that account "*Saha Choula*". This is performed in the sixteenth year including the period of conception. *Gáyatri*, which cannot be recited by the Kshatriyas for more than ten times on each occasion, and other vedic hymns necessary for the performance of daily oblations are taught, and not the Védas as a

whole. The *Samhita* portion of the Rig Veda only is to be recited by the ordained teacher in the hearing of the initiated youths of the royal family of Cochin during their period of studentship. The rights or observances of *Upākarma*, *Vratas* (austerities) and *Gódana* are entirely omitted.

The period of *Brahmacharya* (studentship) is not a long one but is made as short as possible, and its concluding ceremony '*Samāvartana*' is performed on any auspicious day after the fourth day from the date of *Upanayanam*. Its noteworthy feature is that the youth at its conclusion kneels down (*Abhivádya*) before the officiating family priests and before each male and female member of the house senior to himself, in the order of precedence; and from the *káranavan* he receives a sword, the occupation of the caste being military service. But now no special occupation is reserved for this caste, the members of which therefore seek livelihood in Government service, law, medicine, farming, etc.

Cremation is the ordinary process by which the corpse is disposed of, while infants that die before the date prescribed for the name-giving ceremony are buried (*Bhúmi-dānam*). A concise but different form of cremation (*Ekārcha-samskāra*) is ordained for boys and girls who die before attaining the ages of seven and eleven respectively. If the dead body cannot be procured or safely approached, touched or handled, as in the case of death by contagious diseases, an effigy is made with the leaves of the *Butea frondosa*, and this figure is burned on the pyre with the ritual of cremation. If a pregnant woman dies after 180 days, counted from the fifth day after the last menstruation, a more elaborate form of cremation ceremony is performed, in the course of which, the dead body is operated upon to remove the foetus, to see whether it is alive or dead, and in the latter case it is replaced in the womb and burned along with the mother.

The above mentioned and other funeral ceremonies are performed alike in the Brahman and Kshatriya houses of the *Aswáláyana* school. It is only their special features when performed in the case of the latter that are to be noted here. In Kshatriya houses, certain ceremonies, such as *Ekódishtha*, *Sapindi*, (*pinda* or rice-ball offerings, to unite the deceased ancestors) and *Nándeemukha*, are not performed in the elaborate manner as in Brahman households, but in an abridged form for which gifts are made to the Brahmans, for they are

denied to the Kshatriyas. No sacrifices, nor even *Stalēepaka* and *Agráyana*, are performed in their houses. As a variation due to the reckoning of kinship and descent in the female line may be mentioned the order of priority or precedence in the offering of cakes and oblations (*Srādhas*) on the same day, which is as follows:—Mother, mother's brothers, brothers, mother's sisters, sister's children, mother's mother, sisters, mother's conventional husband, and the Brahman that acts as conventional father, that is, the Acharya who performed the ceremony of investiture of the holy thread. Another authority gives the order as follows:—Mother, brothers, sisters (among whom precedence is given according to seniority by age), mother's brothers, mother's sisters, mother's mother, sister's children, mother's conventional husband, and the Acharya. According to another wording, there is some change in the order given above.

In the case of violent deaths, such as, murder, suicide, deaths from the bites of poisonous animals (snakes, mad dogs) or caused by fangs, tusks or beaks (with certain exceptions) the funeral ceremony is of an entirely different character. It is called *Nárayana bali* (sacrifice addressed to Narayana), and is said to be an expiation ceremony (*Práyaschitham*), prescribed in the *Boudhayana Grihya Sūtra* for the absolution of bliss of the souls that are thus, on a sudden and without previous notice, ousted from their physical dwelling.

To the above-mentioned number of scriptural ceremonies may be added two more, namely, the sacrifice on the birthday for prolongation of life (*Ayushyahóma*) and *Puthari* or what virtually corresponds to *Agráyana* in the Brahman houses, when the rice of the new harvest is cooked, consecrated with hymns recited while touching it and eaten for the first time at an auspicious hour. The scriptural ceremonies, with slight variations, in detail, are common to the castes that wear the sacred thread, while the rites and practices of domestic ceremonies classed as (2) in page 155 are widely observed also in Nayar houses and perhaps in those of castes still lower. Yet mention must be made of one or more of this class which no student of anthropology should fail to notice.

One is, what in the vernacular is called *Anthi-uzhiyuka*. It is undoubtedly a ceremony of exorcism for expelling evil spirits and for the protection of new-born children from them. It is performed in the following manner. The mother sits with the

baby in a room, and an exorciser, generally an elderly woman of the caste, waves round the body of the baby, lighted cotton wicks placed on the leaf of the *Mimusops elengi*, in which the demons and spirits are supposed to dwell. Two vessels, one after the other, are also taken, one of which contains a red liquid prepared by mixing lime, saffron powder and water, and the other a black mixture made of charcoal in water. The baby is made to touch each vessel, when the vessels with the lighted wicks are waved round as before. The mother presses milk out of her breast into each vessel, and the respective leaves and wicks are put into it. The bowls are then removed outside the house and the contents poured out. This ceremony is performed at twilight every day till the first birthday is over. This is supposed to remove the potency of the evil-eye. On Tuesdays and Fridays—days specially sacred to the patron deities (good and evil spirits) of magic and exorcism—it is performed in a more elaborate manner. Three morsels of cooked rice, two of which are coloured red and black respectively, with the same materials as are used in colouring the two liquids, and a few more wicks and leaves are added to the articles to be waved round the child. From this it would appear that by this process an artificial baby is made, the morsels representing the solid tissues, the two liquids, the red and black, the varieties of blood in the body of the child. The infant being nourished on its mother's milk, this also is added to give finish to the artificial production. The genesis of this practice is traced back to the horrible episode recorded in the Puranas, of the demon Púthana's mission to poison and murder Krishna during his infancy, and his miraculous self-rescue by killing her while suckling the breasts offered to him.

The above is a simple form of ceremony of exorcism adapted for daily practice. Professional magicians are however called in to perform more elaborate ones to check the inroads of the demons or to counteract their evil influences and to expel them altogether.

No messenger goes alone and unarmed; two must be despatched, armed with iron weapons to fetch the barber woman who acts as midwife at a delivery. Such a woman met on the way should be rejected—a precaution taken because of a tragic occurrence which once happened according to tradition. It is said that a person who appeared professing to be a barber woman, and who was ushered into the apartment of delivery,

proved to be a female demon who ate up both the mother and the infant. An iron weapon or even a piece of metal is considered to be a safe-guard against demoniacal attack and is always carried by women during menses and by both the sexes during the pollution period after the death of any near relation—a practice engendered by the belief that the period of pollution is favourable to possession by demons. The demons are said to be afraid of, and scrupulously avoid, light, and light is therefore considered a safe-guard against their evil influences. A lamp is kept always burning both day and night in the chamber of confinement. This, combined with its mesmeric effects, will perhaps account for the illumination so necessary in the ceremonies of exorcism. These practices are common to all Hindu castes in Kerala. With the same object a cadjan *grandha*—a treatise forming or containing the particular portion of *Mārkaṇḍeya Puranam*, called *Dēvi Mahātmyam*, or extracts of the more important portions therefrom—is always kept under the pillows of the baby.

Thus, it will be seen that the earliest and the most indispensable elements of civilization—iron and fire—are considered as the natural safe-guards against demoniacal attacks to which persons are more liable during the period of pollution and childhood; and with the advance of civilisation these demons and evil spirits seem to vanish. It may be that some of the stories about evil spirits are based upon the memory of outrages and acts of violence perpetrated in early times by aboriginal people of the lowest type. On the stage where the mythical stories are acted, the female demons such as *Pūthana*, *Simhika* and *Sūrpanakha* are represented in black dress with feather crowns, while the paintings and artificial tattoo marks on the face are very similar to the figures seen in the illustrations of American Indians, etc., in books on anthropology and allied sciences.

The Kshatriyas, as other high caste-men, are very particular in observing the birthday ceremonies. Every mother considers it her sacred duty to serve her sons and daughters with meals on their birthdays. She stands behind her son or daughter who is seated before a burning lamp with other auspicious articles placed near it; and after the meals have been served first for the elephant God and afterwards for her child, the mother, praying for the long life, welfare and happiness of her child, passes round and round thrice over its head, a goblet

with a spout containing pure water together with certain herbs, raw rice, and grain. All these ingredients, except the first, are thrown upon the child's head at the conclusion of the ceremony, which, in the local vernacular, is called *Vayar-ozhiyuka*. Both the child and the mother must, on that day, subject themselves before the meal to the ceremonious toilette referred to below.

The essential articles of toilette are sandal-wood paste, a black fluid preparation called *chand* (eye salve) and a bouquet of flowers (*desa pushpam*). Some of these are omitted on certain occasions, while other articles are added to the list on others; e. g., turmeric, the juice of the plant called *mukkootti* in Malayalam, and even the whole plant itself. The creeper called *vayara* (meadow-grass) is also used for the birthday toilette.

The ceremony, called *Kottumchiri*, consists of clapping the hands and laughing while dancing around a bowl full of the same red liquid with the burning wicks on the side of it, as in the ceremony of *Anthi-uzhiyuka* (exorcism), and at the end of the dance it is turned upside down, thus putting out all the lights. This is a thanks-giving service—an offering made in fulfilment of a vow—to the goddess by whose favour a lost thing is recovered. Only children take part in this.

In this connection, mention should be made of the purificatory ceremonies. A girl after her first menses, a woman after her delivery, and the agnates of a deceased member in a family, are freed from pollution by a plunge bath, wearing a garment (*mattu*) washed by a Velan, coupled with the priest's sprinkling a little water sanctified by the recital of holy *mantrams* (*punyadham*). Mere plunge-bath is enough for ordinary purification, and this is scriptural in the case of thread-wearing males. There is, however, an exception. The Kshatriyas are polluted by the touch of the Nayars, but the services of their *adiyan* domestic Nayar servants are a matter of necessity in several of the domestic ceremonies. A maid servant has to do duties in the purificatory baths after the menses and delivery. It is she who has to watch by the bed of, and to wait on, the lady and her baby during the first ten or eleven days after confinement, during which her touch is said not to pollute the former. When the attached house servants are disabled by pollution from doing their duties, the servants of the family priests are generally called in to perform them.

The ceremonies and observances described respectively
 Religion. under the two classes, with few exceptions, are
 not addressed to any particular god. Those

performed for the worship of tutelary deities at home, for the deities in temples, and in the serpent grove, pilgrimage to holy places, worship of sacred animals, plants, streams, and the seas, etc., with fastings on *Eládesi* (the eleventh day after full or new moon), *Śravana Eládesi*, *Pradōsham*, *Ashtami-rohini* (a holiday in August-September to commemorate the birth of Sri Krishna), *Nava-ráthri* (Desara), and festivals such as *Onam*, *Vishu*, *Thiruváthira*, and *Nira* (all peculiar to Malabar) and various rites of magic and exorcism together constitute the medley of religious observances of these people. Their religion may, therefore, be described as Hinduism largely mixed up with animism. An early bath followed by an elaborate and ceremonious toilette on every day during the months of Karkadakam (July-August) and Thulám (October-November), on the day of *Thiruváthira* festival in the month of Dhanu (December-January), and the morning sacrifices offered by the maidens to the Elephant God (Ganesa) in the months of Thulam and Mēenam (March-April) on days respectively presided over by *Thiruvónam* (the twenty-second asterism, Aquila) and *Púram*, (the eleventh asterism of the lump of Leo), must also be added to those mentioned above. If the first menstruation takes place before the scriptural marriage, as is sometimes the case, a similar sacrifice is offered to the same deity every day during the intervening period. The sacrifice may, therefore, be regarded as a prayer for the removal of all obstacles to the marriage. The rites and observances of the Mádhva sect have found their way into the royal family of Cochin.

There are two modes of dressing, viz., (1) the older, with
 Dress and orna- one garment (*vastram* or *pudavu*) exhibiting
 ments. foldings and a knot-like projection in front and adopted on ceremonial occasions, and (2) the modern, with two pieces, one as an under-garment (which for females is seven or eight cubits long) and the other around it. The males wear a longitudinal strip of cloth stitched on a cotton tape tied round the waist, and an outer garment (*mundu*) which is an ordinary loin cloth. The females cover their breasts with a small piece of cloth when they go out.

Malabar ladies have a peculiar way of dressing their hair; the coil of the younger ladies rises like a tapering column on

the head, while that of their elders is almost circular in form lying on the left side over the forehead. No decoration is used for the hair, save flowers; nor do the Kshatriya ladies wear nose-rings. They wear ear-rings, the one in common use being *thóda* made of gold and in shape similar to the circular wooden blocks which the girls use for distending their ear lobes. The old and antiquated ear-rings, which it has superseded and which are worn only on ceremonial occasions, are the two forms of *kúthila*, *mani-kúthila* consisting of golden beads, and *púttu-káthila* shaped like a horse-shoe in outline and consisting of two halves nailed together, while the outside presents a view of closely set golden knobs of different sizes systematically arranged. One of these two ear-rings, a waist ornament (*aranhán*) and anklets are the ornaments worn during the tali-tying ceremony and the puberty or first menstruation ceremony but not afterwards. In brief, what has been said about dress is also true with regard to ornaments; there is one set of ornaments for ceremonies, and another for use or show.

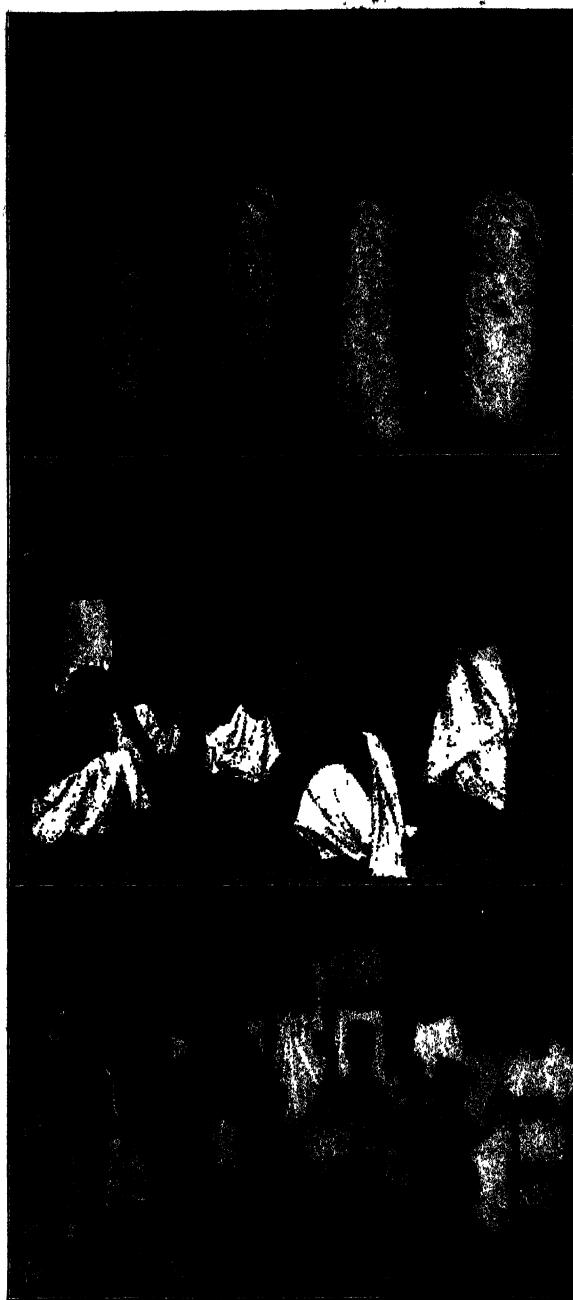
The caste is exclusively vegetarian, and meat and intoxicating drinks are strictly forbidden and scrupulously avoided on pain of loss of caste. They drink milk boiled by Súdras (Nayars) who may also supply butter-milk, ghee, and *puppadam* (thin cakes made of kidney beans) for feasts. In their houses, and even on occasions of public feasts, the Brahmans are served with meals prepared by these Kshatriyas. The two classes can sit in the same row and take their meals together at the same time, but not from the same plantain leaf or plate. But the lads, lasses, and ladies of the Nambuthiris are not served with meals prepared by Kshatriyas, who, however, can supply them with food prepared without water.

Of these, only one need be described here. It is called *Sangha-kali* or *Sastra-kali*, a comic performance by a theatrical company of Brahmans and Kshatriyas. The date of its origin is unknown; but tradition ascribes the representation of the Brahmanical army and organisation of eighteen such companies in Kerala in ancient times of Parasurama and one more afterwards to Kodasseri Kartha, whose descendants still live in Chalakudi. The following is its traditional origin. "In its import it seems to combine the propitiation of Siva and Parvati in the manner indicated by a tradition at Trikkarayur with exorcism and skill in swordsmanship. It is of course generally believed that in

Dit.

Games.

ancient days the Brahmans themselves ruled Kerala. When they found it necessary to have a separate king, one *Attakat Nambuthiri* was deputed with a few other Brahmans to go and obtain a ruler from the adjoining *Chera* territory. The only pass in these days that connected Malabar with Coimbatore was what is to-day known as *Nerumangalam*. When the Nambuthiris were returning through this pass with the ruler they have secured from the *Chera* King, a strange light was observed on the adjacent hills. Two young Brahmans of the *Chengamanát* village, one proceeding towards the hill to investigate the source, found to their amazement that it was none other than *Sri Bhagavati*, the consort of *Siva*, who enjoined them to go to *Kodungallur*, the capital of the *Perumals*, *via Trikkarayur*. Seeing that the sight of *Bhagavati* foretold prosperity, the king called that range of hills *Nerumangalam*, or "true bliss", and made an endowment of all the surrounding land to the Brahman village of *Chengamanát* whose members had the good fortune to see the Goddess *vis-à-vis*. When they entered the temple of *Trikkarayur*, an unseen voice was heard to exclaim "*Chera Perumal*" which meant that, in that town, where *Parasurama* was believed to be dwelling, no *Perumal* (king) should ever enter—a traditional injunction still represented by the *Malabar Kshatriyas*. At this place the sixth *Perumal* who, according to tradition, had a pronounced predilection for the *Bouddha* religion (*Islamism* or *Buddhism*, we cannot say), called a meeting of the Brahmans and told them that religious discussion should be held between them and the *Bouddhas*, in view to decide their relative superiority. The presiding deity of the local *Saiva* shrine was then propitiated by the Brahmans to enable them to come out victorious from that trial. A *Gangama* saint appeared before them and taught them a hymn called *Nálupádam* (four feet or parts of a *slóka*) which the Nambuthiris say is extracted from the *Sáma-veda*. The saint further advised them to take out a lamp from within the temple which tradition ascribes to have existed from the time of *Mándhata*, a distant progenitor of *Sri Rama* to a room built on the western ghat of the temple tank and pray to *Siva* in terms of the hymn. While this was continued for forty-one days, six Brahmans, with *Mayura Bhatta* at their head, arrived from the East Coast to the succour of the Nambuthiris. With the help of these Brahmans, the Nambuthiris kept up a



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protracted discussion with the Bouddhas. Wishing to bring it to a close, the Perumal thought of applying a practical test. He enclosed a snake within a pot and asked the disputants to declare its contents. The Bouddhas came first with the correct statement, while the Brahmans followed by saying that it is a lotus flower. The Perumal was, of course, pleased with the Bouddhas, but when the pot was opened, it turned out to be different from what was put in. It was a lotus flower. The Bouddhas then felt defeated, and ever afterwards the sacred hymn called *Nalupadam* has been sung by the Nambuthiris in view to secure a variety of objects, every one of which they expect to attain by this means. It is also said that, when the Brahmans were propitiating Siva at Trikkarayur as already stated, diverse spirits and angels were found amusing Párvati with their quips and cranks. A voice from heaven was then heard to say that such frolics must form thereafter part of the worship of Siva.”¹

It is a socio-religious performance in the royal families, and those of local chiefs of the higher castes in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, which patronise one or more of these companies: and each of these again has, in one or more temples, its patron deities whose aid they invoke during the performance. Each company has its office-bearers, a *Vákyavritthi* and a *Parisha*. The former who is the real manager of the company is a Nambuthiri of the vedic class, and the latter is his assistant and is in charge of the dress and other articles for the performance.²

This company of actors whose number varies according to the chances of remuneration receive formal invitation for their performance in the families of those above mentioned, on such occasions as marriage, the first anniversary of the death of a deceased father, mother, or the head of the family, the feeding ceremony (*Chóroonu*) of a child, and the ceremony of investiture of the holy thread (*Upanayanam*).

The programme of the performance is as follows. The first of them is *Kanamirikkuka*. The party attends the ceremony during the day. There is a formal announcement by the beating of the drum (*Keli-kottu*) at the feast. In the evening,

1. Travancore Census Report, pages 315-316.

2. This was formerly a pure, political, and military function. The duty of the Nambuthiri is to give advice according to Sastras, and it is the duty of the Kshatriyas to act up to it.

generally after 4 o' clock, the party sitting round a copper caldron sing merry songs and accompanying themselves by beating on the caldron with their hands. In the midst of this, one of them rises, takes a spoon (a cocoanut shell provided with a bamboo handle) and mimics the part of a *Velichapad*. After this they bathe and return for another performance which is called *Nūlupādam*. This is a dance by four men around a burning lamp during the recitation of some formula which is said to convey some high ideals and eternal principles of religion. They are next treated to a sumptuous supper, during which each in turn recites verses known as *kari-slókams*, which describe in detail how the curries of the feast are cooked and served. The singer calls for any preparation he likes, though he is not meant to be served. A long leaf, with all the preparations, is placed in front of the burning lamp in honour of Ganapati, who is believed to remove all obstacles. After supper, they organise a torch light procession, singing boat-songs, and return to the *kalam*, or hall in the house, and soon after, the whole party, with the sacred thread hanging vertically round their necks (*upaviti*), sit around the burning lamp (near which are placed a vessel of rice, cocoanuts, plantains and flowers) to sing songs in praise of Siva, the Lord of Trikkarayur, and perform a comic or humorous performance in which mimicry plays an important part. Then they all stand up and dance singing songs, keeping time with their feet as they move along.

The exorcising, by the waving of a lighted torch before the face of the host, of any evil spirits that may have attached themselves, is then gone through, and one of the performances ends with a prayer to Bhagavati to shower on him every prosperity.

At its finis and together with the guests invited to the ceremony, the host offers salutations with the fee for the performance. There is, after this, another performance called *Pānakali*, for which two vessels, one bigger than the other, filled with paddy and rice, and a cocoanut are placed in front of a burning lamp near which a few of them sing songs in honour of Ganapati. Then follows the performance by certain actors of feats with swords and shields which prolong till day-break if more presents are expected. The performance is dull and uninteresting, and few people, whose real home is not

Malabar, will be able to appreciate and enjoy the play. A great Brahman Pandit, in the employ of the Zamorin of the day, when asked about the merits of the performance, is reported to have said, "It is a mental aberration of the people of Malabar."

Nevertheless, this old institution is still very popular in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore, and is not likely to disappear in the reforming age of modern India.

In temples the Kshatriyas can approach for worship up to the very threshold of the shrine in which the deity is placed. The entry is however forbidden in certain temples which tradition attributes, in some cases, to the consecration ceremony having been performed by Parasurama, the enemy of the Kshatriyas. The touch of the Kshatriya defiles the Brahman, who is thereby debarred from taking part in any special and optional ceremonies, but not from taking meals or performing the ordinary and special oblations during the morning, midday, and evening services (*sandhya-vandanam*). There are, however, some strictly orthodox Brahmans, very few in number, who will neither perform any ceremony nor eat nor drink while polluted by the touch of a Kshatriya. There is one Kshatriya house at Chalakudi, called Thirupad, now branched off into several, which calls for special notice. It is a Kshatriya house, but degraded, its fall being attributed by tradition to its having accepted, in days of yore, the services of a Telugu Brahman (instead of a Malayali or Nambuthiri Brahman) as the priest to conduct the domestic ceremonies. These are now performed under the supervision of Nambuthiris, whose spiritual supremacy is now acknowledged in full.

From what has been said above, it will be seen that the Kshatriya community is an intermediate caste between the Brahmans (Nambuthiris) and the Sudras (Nayars) and has affinities to both; to the former, in matters of ablution ceremonies, and of food and drink, and to the latter in those of matrimonial relationship and inheritance, the constitution and propagation of the family. It is an historical fact that when two people or races come into close contact with each other and live side by side as members of a body politic, each in course of time adapts itself and assimilates something of the manners and customs of the other.

Thus, the Nambuthiri class (Aryans) has become Dravidianised and Dravidian Nayar population has become Aryanised though in a lesser degree. The intermediate caste therefore must be the Aryans more Dravidianised or the Dravidians more Aryanised, *i. e.*, the Aryans degraded or the Dravidians more elevated, more probably the latter, or it may be a mistake to suppose that racial unity or uniformity exists among the members of a caste, as it is now constituted, and an expert observer may, therefore, detect several racial types among them. Dr. John Beddoe says that the Kshatriyas of Cochin are evidently Aryans.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BRĀHMANS.

The caste that occupies the highest position in the order of social precedence is that of the Brah-
Introduction mans.¹ They are called *Dvijās* (twice born), *Bhūdévas* (lords of the earth) and are also addressed by other similar complimentary names. They are generally classed under ten main divisions which are included in two equal groups. These groups are called *Panchagaudās*² and *Panchadravidās*,³ the former being the Brahmins living north, and the latter south, of the Vindhya Range. The Brahmins of the latter group claim superiority over those of the former owing to their better religious observances and complete abstinence from animal food.

1. 'Brahmins' is a contraction of 'Brahmana', which means one who has realised the 'Brahmam-Para-Brahmam', that something of which the universe is a manifestation according to Hindu philosophy. (Travancore Manual, page 247).

Brahmins are said to have sprung from the face of Brahman or *Virat-svan upam* of God. The term 'Brahmins' originally denoted devout worshippers and contemplative sages or poets who composed hymns in praise of the gods. But when the ceremonial worship became highly developed and complicated, and the sacred functions became quite distinct from other functions, the epithet gradually came to be employed for a minister of religion and eventually came to signify one particular class of priests with special functions. Then the hierarchy of the Brahmins were completely organised: and that possibly took place towards the close of the Vedic period. (A Peep into the Vedic Age, pages 102-103, by Ramachandra Gosha).

2. Panchagaudas are the Saraswathis, Kanyakubja, Gandara, Utkala and Mithila Brahmins. (Hindu Castes and Sects, by Jogendra Nath Bhattacharya).

3. Panchadravidas are the Maharashtra, Telugu, Canarese, Tamil, and Malayalam Brahmins.

THE NAMBUTHIRIS.

Among the Drávida Brahmans are classed the Nambuthiris, known also as Kerala or Malayála Brahmans, who are even now, as they have always been, a dominant and priestly class of people in Malabar, Cochin, and Travancore. They are the vedic Brahmans of the purest Aryan type leading a high spiritual life in their homes and maintaining an ideal of a high order of religious seclusion or rather keeping aloof from 'the busy world's ignoble strife'. They are also the aristocracy of the land, marked most conspicuously by two characteristics, simplicity and exclusiveness. In ancient times they devoted themselves to the practice of religious austerities and seldom cared to engage in schemes of aggrandizement or worldly ambition. This manner of life did not last long: for they became the confidential advisers of kings, and all judicial authority, vested in royalty, was entrusted to them. Thus, in course of time, they became the expounders of law—both human and divine—and for this they were liberally rewarded by the rulers, while every religious ceremony implied feeding them and giving them handsome presents.

The word 'Nambuthiri' is derived from *nambuka* (to trust), and *thiri* (an honorific suffix meaning sacred, as in *Akkitiri*, *Somatiri*, and *Samutiri*). The name, according to this derivation, indicates the position they held as the confidential advisers and trusted friends of the Rajas and chiefs. There is another derivation of the word from *nam* (knowledge), and *purikka* (to impart), and this alludes to the great vedic learning which they, as a class, possess, and which alone in their opinion constitutes true knowledge.¹ According to Sir William Hunter, they are Brahmanised fishermen.² This statement is nothing more than an outrageous insult to the whole community, and the customs above referred to, which will be described later on, do not in the least suggest or justify such a remark. The results of the anthropometric measurements of Mr. Fawcett lead him to believe that the Nambuthiris are the truest Aryans in Southern India.

According to the two popular works, *Kerala Máhátmyam* and *Keralólpathi*, the Nambuthiris were the descendants of the Brahmans who were

Traditions of origin.

1. Travancore Manual, Vol. II, page 248.

2. Sir William Hunter's Orissa. Longman's Manual, page 274.

brought to Kerala from all parts of India by the renowned sage and warrior, Sri Parasurāma, who settled them in sixty-four *grāmams* (villages) into which the country was divided for their sake. Their original habitation was *Ahikshétram*, whence they are said to have migrated to *Aryapuram* in the plains south of *Kurukshétra*, and here it was that they were invited to colonise the newly reclaimed territory. They were also made lords of the lands with high privileges and honours: and to make them stay permanently here, certain innovations in their customs and manners are said to have been introduced by Parasurama. These earliest colonists were afterwards joined by others from the banks of the Nerbada, the Krishna and the Cauvery.¹

With regard to the date of their advent and settlement in Kerala, there is no authentic information. The orthodox tradition as given in the popular works, Kerala Māhātmyam and Keralólpathi, would fix it in the *Tréta-Yuga* or the second great Hindu cycle. There is an astrological formula—'*Chitta-Chalanam*'—according to which 1,346 years have passed since the fall of Panniyur *gramam*: this suggests that there were Brahmans in Malabar before that period. The Periplus and the writings of Ptolemy and other early writers testify to the existence of Brahman settlements on the Malabar coast as early as the first century²: and this very nearly coincides with the period marked by the astrological formula above given. Recent researches point to an earlier date than was at one time supposed. The Hiragaldi and Pallava grants prove that the Brahmans had settled in South India in the fourth or fifth century A. D.,³ and in the *Sahyādrī Khāndam*, one Mayūra Varman of the Kadamba dynasty is said to have introduced Brahman colonists from the north and granted them sixty-four villages below the ghats, and the date of this is supposed to be at the close of the fifth century.⁴ Their post

1. There are, it is said, many points of similarity between the Nambuthiris and the Telugu Brahmans, viz., in house-name, cast of countenance, frank and outspoken nature, proficient vedic study, situation of houses in gardens, construction of houses, dress of women, absence of musical taste. (Travancore Census Report, 1891, page 654).

2. Travancore Census Report, page 296.

3. Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. I, Part II, page 319, and *Epigraphica Indica* 1, 8.

4. *Epigraphica Indica*, VIII—31.

puberty, marriage customs, and the absence of any allusion in the Mithákshara to the Sarvaswadanam marriage of these people show, to some extent, that they must have been separated from the main body of the Aryans or Aryo-Dravidians, before this form of adoption became obsolete, *i. e.*, long before the fourth or the fifth century.¹ So conflicting are the statements of antiquarians that it may fairly be assumed, in the absence of still better and more reliable evidence, that the Brahmans were already in Kérala or Parasurama-Kshéthram² long before the fourth or the fifth century.

It is said that the Nambuthiris who settled in Kérala in sixty-four villages were divided into two sects, namely, (1) Vaishnavites or the Panniyúr *grámakkúr* or the inhabitants of Panniyúr village³ and (2) the Chovour *grámakkar* (villagers of Chovaram or Sivapuram, Siva's village), who readily accepted the Chola, Chera and Pandyan kings who followed the Sivite teachings from Chalukyas. They formed a regular oligarchy with four *Talis* or administrative bodies having their head-quarters at Cranganur. This institution, it is said, did not work well: the people were oppressed by the protectors who sought to make the most of their opportunities during their short term of office. The Brahmans thereupon assembled at Tirunavai and decided to select a king, and their choice fell upon Kiya-Perumal of Kiyapura or the country on the other side of the ghats. He was brought to Kérala and installed as the first of the Perumals in the year of the Kali-Yuga, '*Bhūmanbhūpōyam prāpya*', which corresponds to 216 A. D. It was also resolved that he should rule for 12 years, but he only governed the kingdom for eight years and four months.

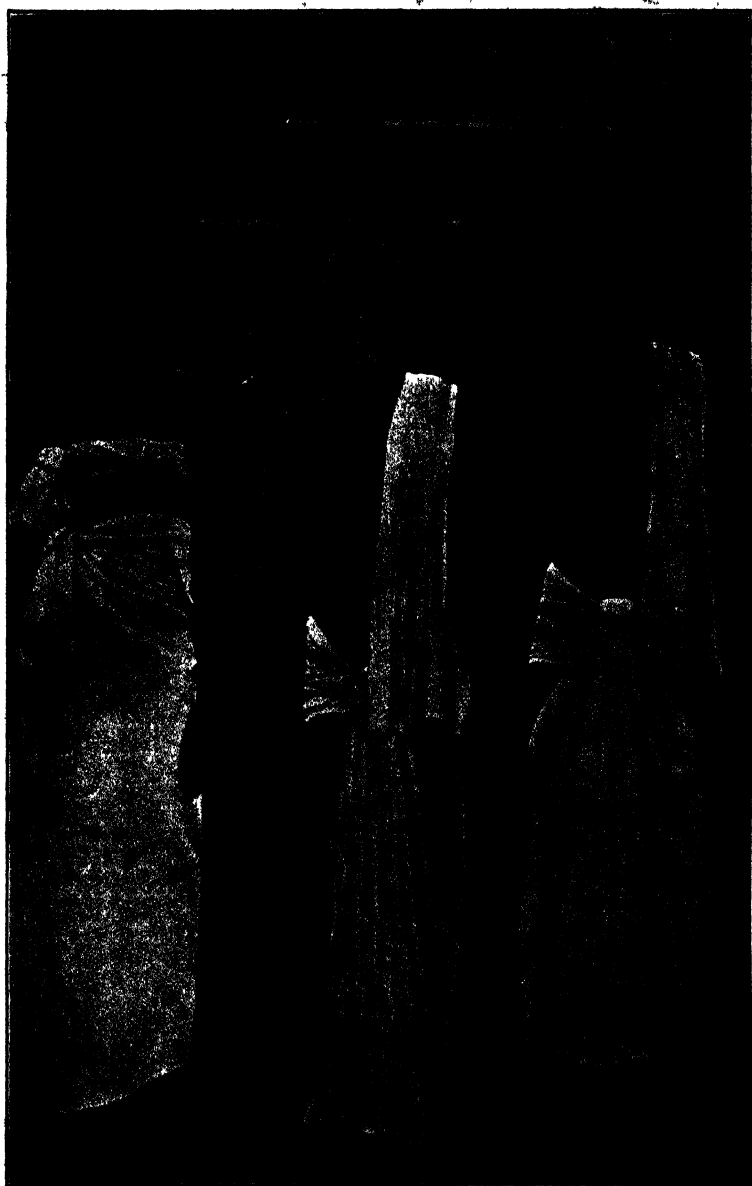
There are six subdivisions among the Nambuthiris arranged in the order of social precedence. They are—

Subdivisions of
the caste.

1. Malabar Quarterly Review, March 1902, Indian Law Report, Madras XI, 180.

2. Parasurama Kshethram is one of the many names given to Malabar in the past, and has its origin in the well-known legend that Malabar or Keralam was reclaimed from the sea by its patron saint, the Brahman warrior Parasurama. This legend is related in most of the Puranas and is the starting point of all traditional accounts of the early history of the country. It is also called Karma-Bhumi or the country where salvation depends upon good actions.

3. Panniyur—*ur* or village, and *panni* or boar. Those who came under the patronage of the Vaishnavites of the Chalukya dynasty with the boar as their royal emblem.



AZHUVANCHERI THAMBRKAL

I. *Thampurákkals*.—This term is a corruption of the Sanskrit name 'samráṭ', or sovereign, which seems to have some reference to temporal and secular authority. In former times there were two illustrious families of *Thamburákkals*, *Kalpancherry* and *Azhuváancherry*, the latter of which alone now remains. As spiritual *sámráts* (sovereigns), they are entitled to : (1) *Bhadrásanam*, the chief seat in an assembly ; (2) *Brahmasámrájyam*, or lordship over Brahmans ; (3) *Brahmavarchas*, or authority in vedic lore ; and (4) *Sarvamányam*, universal respect. The spiritual influence of the members of this family must have been and is still very great in Malabar. Though higher than the other divisions of the Nambuthiris, they form with the *Adhyans* an endogamous sect. There is a popular tradition respecting the acquisition of this title. A Nambuthiri was on his way home after a *Hiranyagarbham* ceremony with a gold cow, a present from the ruling sovereign of Travancore. He was taunted by a Pulayan who said that his caste-men were the claimants of dead cows, and not the illustrious Brahmans ; but that, if he should have it (the gold cow), he should give life to it and make it walk home. The pious Brahman muttered some *mantrams* and sprinkled some water on it when it became alive. The Pulayan saw it and said that he was indeed the great *Thamburákkal*.

II. *Adhyans*.—They form eight families, and there is not a correct tradition to the effect that they are descended from the eight sons of the renowned Brahman sage who lived on the banks of the Krishna. This does not appear to be true as they belong to different *gótras*. They live a retired life and spend their time in studying the Vedas and practising acts of piety, charity, and benevolence, receiving no gifts or *dánams*. They do not perform *yágyams* nor become a *Vánaprastha* (dwelling in a forest) or *Sanyási* ; the accumulated spirituality of their ancestors was so great that it is considered to be lasting enough even for their latest descendants. To two families in Malabar Parasurama gave the high privilege of *tantram* or the status of the ruling priests in most of the important temples. The *Adhyans* are generally addressed by the title of 'Nambuthiripad' which is attached to their family names. Their women are distinguished from other Nambuthiri women by their mode of dressing, their caste marks, etc. They are privileged to wear silver bangles, while others can wear only pewter or

bell-metal bangles. The eight families above referred to are membered by the mnemonic *Kalamèmakulu, Chemba muri vella*, and they are—¹

1. Kalangandhathur Graham (Olappa Mana, Varikka-seri Mana, Ottúr Mana) ;
2. Mezhatthol Graham (Koodallur, Kodanád, Kudalát-tupuram Mana) ;
3. Máthur Graham (Puvulli Mana, Máthur Mana) ;
4. Kulukkallur (Oruvuláseri Mana, Porayannúr Mana, Mappád Mana) ;
5. Chemmangat Graham ;
6. Pázhur Graham (Pàduthol Mana, Killimangalathu Mana, Pallipurathu Mana) ;
7. Murundothil Graham (Ekádesi Thekkédattu Mana, Ekádesi Vadakkedattu Mana) ;
8. Vellangallur Graham (Akkarakuruchi Mana, Elakuruchi Mana, Vázhapilli Mana).

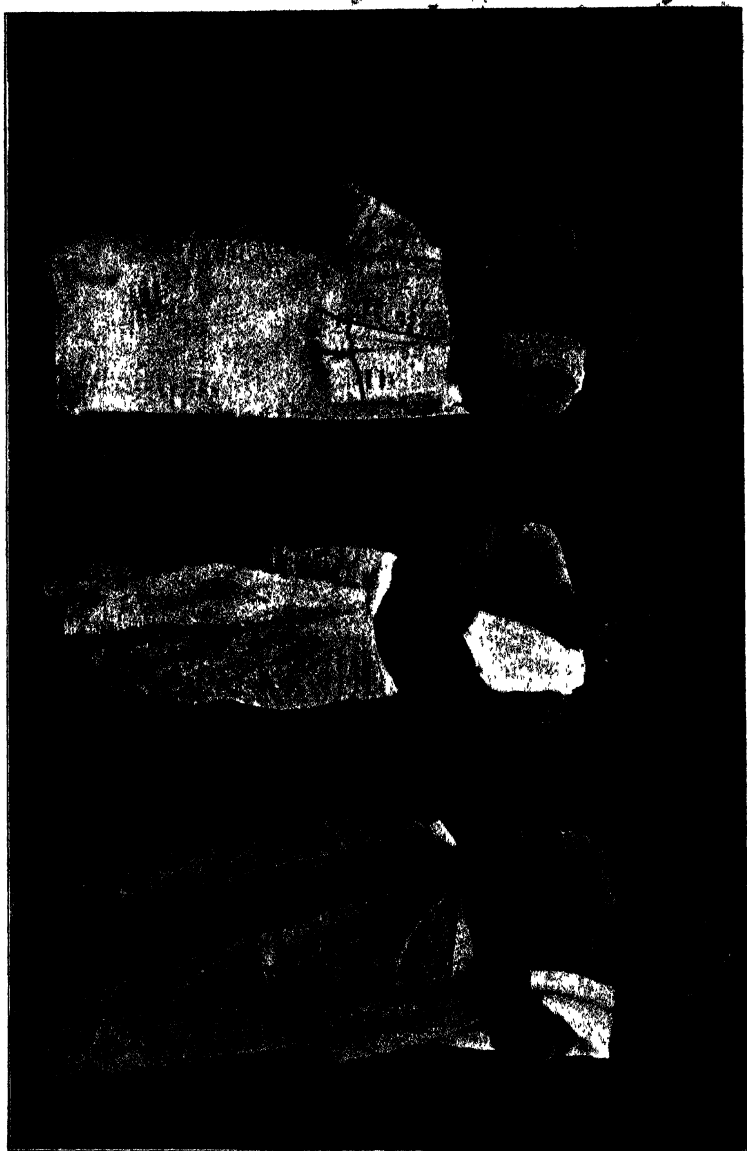
There are several classes of Adhyans of which the members of the eight families are the most important.

III. *Visishta Nambuthiris*.—These are of two classes, viz., *Agnihóthris* and *Bhattathiris*, and of the former there are three divisions, viz., *Akkithiris*, those who have performed the ceremony of *Agniýádhana* (worship of fire), *Somáthiris*, those who performed the *Sóma* sacrifice, which married men alone are entitled to perform and at which the Nayar is an indispensable factor, and the *Bhattathiris*, the Brahmans who study and explain the sciences and sacred lore of ancient times, namely, Tharka (logic), Vedántha (religious philosophy or theosophy), Mimámsa, Vyákarana (grammar), Bhárata and Prabhákara. The last were, in fact, the religious teachers of Malabar, and always had a large number of disciples about them. Among the last subdivisions are included the *Vádyáns* or the heads of the vedic schools at Trichur in Cochin and Tirunavai in British Malabar, the *Vaidikans*² or the expounders of caste rules, and the *Smárthans*³ or 'socio moral tribunals of Brahmanical Malabar' who investigate into sexual offences and preside at *Smártha Vichárams*.

1. All these have undergone partition. The names of the branches into which they were divided are given within brackets.

2. The six Vaidikans:—*Thaikkat*, *Kaplingat*, *Pandal*, *Perumpatappu*, *Kaimukku* and *Cherumukku*.

3. Smarthans are *Pattachomayar*, *Muttamana*, *Bhattatiri*, *Naduvathu Puthuvar*, *Iruvachi Puthuvar*, *Vellakkattu Bhattatiri*, and *Meppalli Nambuthiri*.



ADHYAN NAMBUATHIRIS

IV. *Sámanyas*.—They are the ordinary Nambuthiris who study the Vedas, perform religious services in temples and practise *manthra vādams* (magic). Of these, some are *tantris* in temples.

V. *Játimatrás* or *Játimatranmar*.—These include—

(1) *Ashta Vaidyans*,¹ or the eight families of physicians who were directed by Parasurama to devote themselves solely to the study and practice of medicine and surgery. They are also called Nambi and Músu.

(2) *Yatrakalikkúr* or *Sásthra Nambuthiris*.²—These are the Brahmans who are supposed to have accepted the profession of arms from Parasurama and who may on that account be said to be partly Brahman and partly Kshatriya.

(3) *Grámani Nambuthiris*, i. e., those who undertake the duties of protecting the *grámanams* or Brahman villages under the orders of their founder, and actually received lands or territory from him. They were also called Brahmani Adhyans, and were at one time the virtual rulers of their possessions.

(4) Brahmans, who, by poverty, chronic disease, laziness or other causes, gave up the vedic study.

The first three classes of the Brahmans above mentioned were obliged to give up their vedic study because of the special duties imposed upon them by Parasurama, but the first study or *mutalmura*, reading the Vedas or hearing them recited once, was gone through. The members of those subdivisions, though looked upon by the rest of the community as somewhat inferior to them, are, nevertheless, allowed to bathe in the same ghat, take meals in their company and to assist in cooking them.

VI. *Sapagrasthas* (receivers of the course).—These are the Nambuthiris who are believed to have questioned the divine nature of Parasurama. They are therefore prohibited from having any caste honours, from studying the Vedas, from associating with the rest of the Nambuthiris and the partaking of the *nivédyam* rice in temples.

1. The eight physician families are, Pulumantol, Kuttancheri, Alattur, Taikkattu, Eletattu, Vellur, Chicattaman and Karantole.

2. It is traditionally alleged that some portion of the Brahmans did at one time arm themselves. The members who did so are said to have been 86,000 and they are known as Ayudhapanis or weapon-bearers. The heads of this class are Nambiyatiris still pointed out as the chief of them. There are probably some foundations for the tradition, but the profession of arms was not a congenial employment for a Brahman under the old regime. Logan's *Manual of Malabar*, pages 121-122.

Pápishtanmar.—The Nambuthiris of this class had by their conduct disqualified themselves for respect or equal rights and privileges with the other Brahmans. To this subdivision belong the *Oorillaparisha-Moossads*, who accepted the gift of land from Parasurama, the Panniyur villagers who scandalised the feelings of other Brahmans by offering an insult to their idol *Varáhamúrthi*, and the Nambuthiris who murdered the sovereign to please their caste-men, and those who countenanced the murder of Bhútaráya Perumal.

The subdivisions above given are partly based on the vedic, philosophic and other studies, religious merits (coupled with the functions assigned to some Brahmans proficient in them), and partly on the worldly occupations enjoined on others for the well-being of the whole community. There was, originally, no difference in respect of honour paid to Brahmans employed in certain kinds of functions and those employed in others; for all were found to be equally useful and necessary to the commonwealth. But in course of time the power and influence of the educated class began to increase, while that of the rest of the community gradually declined; they became the priestly class and as their influence became supreme in all matters, temporal and spiritual, they looked down upon the uneducated mass as very much their inferior. The whole community of the Nambuthiris may thus broadly be divided into *Othullavar* (vedic) and *Othilláthavar* (non-vedic). The former are privileged to recite and expound the Vedas, and perform the sixteen ceremonials (*Shódasa Kriyás*), while the latter can neither study the Vedas nor superintend the performance of the above ceremonies. The *Játimátras* and *Sápagrasthás* belong to the latter class. Save that, there is no inter-dining between the women of these divisions; in all other respects the observances of the two classes are similar.

The Nambuthiris are fond of mnemonics and by a well-devised one, the privileges in regard to the performance of religious rites and other matters of a purely social nature serve as the basis for the subdivision of the Nambuthiris in the order of social precedence, as recognised among themselves. For this purpose, the privileges may be grouped under two main divisions given in the following mnemonic formula:—

1. *Edu* (the leaf of a *cadjan grandhu* or book): the right of studying and teaching the Vedas or *Sástras*.

2. *Adu* (sheep): the right of performing holy sacrifices.
3. *Picha* (mendicancy symbolic of family priests); the right of officiating as family priests.
4. *Bhiksha* (receiving alms): the right of becoming a *Sanyasi*.
5. *Othu* (Vedas): the right of studying the Vedas.
6. *Sánthi* (officiating as temple priests): the right of performing priestly functions in temples.
7. *Adukkala* (kitchen): the right of cooking for all classes of Brahmins.
8. *Arangu* (stage): the right of taking part in the performance of *Sástrangam* Nambuthiris.
9. *Kadavu* (bathing place or ghát): the right of bathing in the same bathing place with other Brahmins, or the right of touching after bathing, without thereby disqualifying the person touched for performing religious services.
10. *Panthi* (row of eaters): the right of messing in the same row with other Brahmins.

Those who enjoy privilege No. 1 are entitled to all the remaining privileges. Those who enjoy No. 2 have all the privileges from No. 2 downwards, but not No. 1, those having No. 3 have similarly all the privileges from No. 3 downwards, but not Nos. 1 and 2, and so on.¹

The Nambuthiris, as has been already said, were originally settled in *grámams* or villages of which there were thirty-two, most of which have now disappeared. The chief among those which are still in existence are:—

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Sukapuram or Sivapuram,
probably identical with Chovaram. | 6. Karikkad. |
| 2. Perumanam. | 7. Perinchellur. |
| 3. Irinjalakuda. | 8. Venganád. |
| 4. Panniyur. | 9. Alattúr. |
| 5. Trissivapérur (Trichur). | 10. Edakkád. |

Of these, only two villages, Panniyur and Chovaram, are mentioned in the Syrian deed of 774 A. D. (or more probably 1320), because by that time the several gramams became organised into two factions known as the Panniyurkúr and the Chovaramkúr, so that it may be believed that there were only

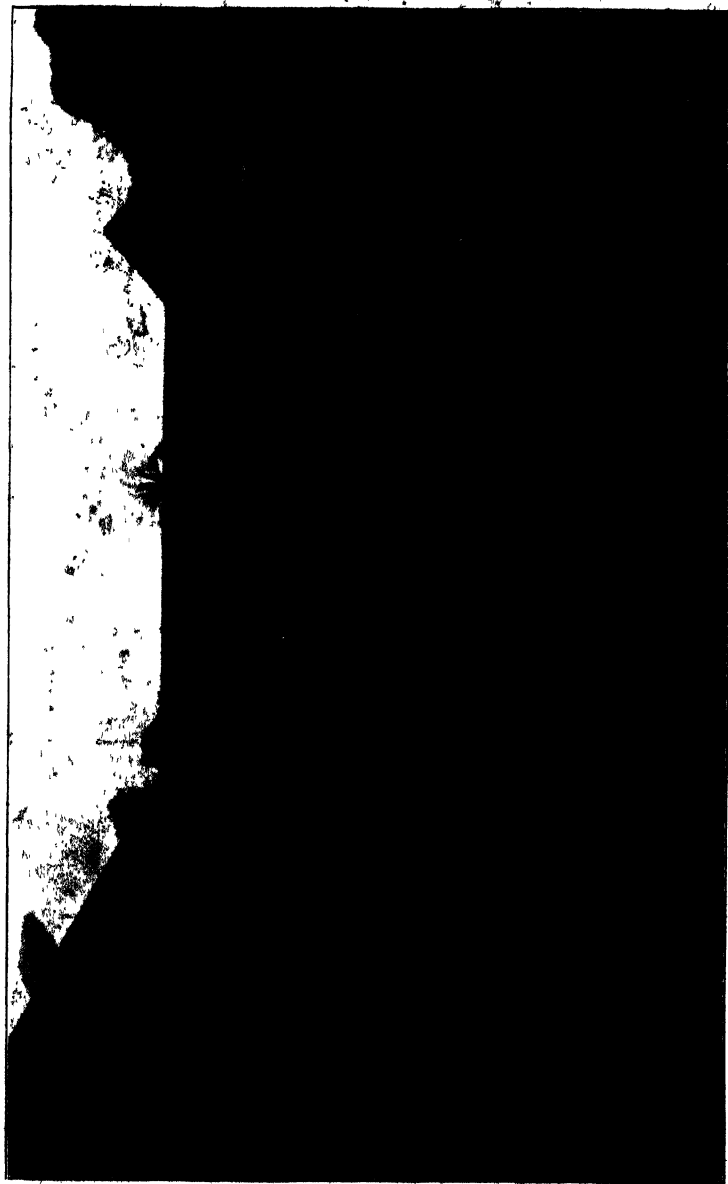
1. Cochin Census Report, 1901, Vol. I, pages 146-147.

two organised villages of the Brahmans in Malabar at the time, both vedic and non-vedic. The other *grāmams* as well as others now extinct, either probably branched off from the two organised villages or settled in the country subsequently.

The religious seclusion of the Nambuthiris has always been the chief motive in the choice of their habitations which are situated either on the slopes of hills or on the banks of rivers abounding in natural beauty. Their *illams* or *manás* (houses) are in the midst of extensive compounds forming spacious gardens in which are grown mango, jack, tamarind and other trees. The *vilva* and *tulasi* are also grown therein. These compounds contain *sarpakāvus* or serpent groves in the centre of which is the image of the cobra in granite, and sometimes its living representative haunts the house as if in recognition of the memorial. In the same compound or close by, may be seen a tank or two for bathing, two or three wells for gardening and domestic use, and a temple for worship. These, in fact, form the inseparable accompaniments. Wherever there is a temple close by, the Nambuthiri may prefer to bathe in the tank attached to it; but his favourite bathing ghat is always the tank near the house and owned by him. Often it is provided with a shed which may be used as a protection against sun and rain. It is here that after their early bath they perform their *japams* (meditations), vedic recitations, and *namaskírams* (prostrations) towards the Sun, and at times it is even used as a place of rest. §

A Nambuthiri house generally faces the east, and at a distance from it is the gate-house, provided with a room and an open space on either side; here the servants remain and keep watch during the night. It has, in some cases, an upper storey mainly intended to lodge strangers and visitors. Between the gate-house and the main building there is a wide open space called *mittam*, with a raised foot-path either paved with bricks or hardened with mud.

The house itself is quadrangular or square in form with a court-yard in the centre surrounded by rooms on all sides. On the east or west of the court-yard is a room for the bachelor members, to which strangers are also admitted. The rest of the rooms are for the *zenana*. Right on the opposite side and beyond the central court-yard is the *arapura*, made entirely of massive wood-work where the valuables of the house are kept.



52
A TYPICAL NUMBUTHIRI ILLAM (HOUSE)

The two rooms on each side of this are the store-room and the bed-room. The kitchen, which is as a rule spacious, is on the northern side, and close to it is the well from which water is drawn for cooking and washing. In some *illams*, attached to the kitchen is a large dining-hall for strangers and visitors. Several other rooms are set apart for vedic studies, the worship of the family deities and for the performance of ceremonies. Many of the houses consist of one or two storeys which are partitioned into rooms and halls.

Most of the houses are palatial structures built of laterite, cemented with mud or mortar. The door-ways and windows are sometimes well carved, and these edifices which were at one time thatched are now tiled. The furniture of a Nambuthiri house is both very simple and scanty, and small wooden planks either oblong or made in the form of a tortoise (*kúrmasana*) are used for devotional purposes, and at other times, especially when taking meals, are used in the place of chairs; but skins of the tiger and spotted deer more often take the place of these. In the rich families are to be found swinging cots hung from the ceiling by iron or other metal chains, while a few spare beds and mats may also be found for the use of strangers and visitors.

A little detached from the main houses of the aristocrats are also seen one or two small buildings neatly furnished for the residence of the junior members of the family. They are comfortable enough and well furnished to suit modern tastes; and, as a rule, a portion of the building is used as an office or room for the transaction of the ordinary routine of business.

Thus, the Nambuthiris have all that they want in the localities where they live, often surrounded by their tenants and servants, who, peaceful and contented on account of their lord's kindly nature, genial manners; and considerate treatment, bow down to them not simply as landlords but more as their liege-lords and benefactors, nay, even as the very gods on earth to whom they pay their customary dues year after year willingly and gratefully.

There are some ceremonies¹ to be performed by the head-men of the carpenters and stone-masons at the time of laying the foundation of a house, when the work is in progress

and also when it is completed; but the most important of these is performed by the Brahmans, and is called *Vāstu-Yāgam*. It is considered to be a vedic rite, for without it no house, temple, or tank is fit for divine use. The word *vāstu* means the site for a dwelling or the dwelling itself. *Vāstōspathi* is one of the names of Indra in the Vedas, but one of the later conceptions, however, of the vedic religion was that of a separate *Vāstospathi* or house-protector, who was regarded as presiding over the foundation of a house, and to him are addressed hymns in that connection.¹

This vedic conception of the *Vāstospathi* was developed in later days into a belief in the existence of a *Vāstunara* or *Vāstupurusha* with a genealogy of his own. Varaha Mahira says that he is some being who defied both worlds, on account of which he was subdued by the host of gods and hurled down. The several parts of the body were subjected to the several gods by whom it was first attacked. It is this being of immortal substance who was destined by the Creator to be the spirit of dwelling-houses.

Matsya Purāna gives a different account. Simhika, wife of Kāsyapa, gave birth to two sons, Rāhu and Vāstu. The elder had his neck severed by Hari, while the younger was cast down by the gods. There is also a fuller but partially different account given in another part of the same work to the effect that, when Siva destroyed the demon Andaka, a drop of perspiration fell on the ground from Siva's forehead which assumed the form of an immense and terrific being who greedily devoured all the blood of the demons who had been killed in the battle. Still insatiate, he practised austerities and obtained from the same deity as a boon the power of devouring the whole world. Then the gods and the anti-gods all combined to bind him down, and each of them entered into that part of his body which was attacked by him. Becoming thus the dwelling of all the gods, he was called Vāstu, and as he was overpowered he enquired how he was to subsist, whereupon the gods allotted to him the *balis* offered within *vāstu* or dwelling by the house-holder as well as the offerings made in the *Vāstōpasamana Yajna*. This satisfied him and from that time the *Vātsu-Yajna* has been ordained for the same.

1. Rig Veda, VII, pages 54-55; Muir's Sanskrit Texts, Vol. 1, page 273.

The daily offerings to the Vāstu spirit are mentioned in the *Aswalyana Grihya Sutra*.

The ceremony, as performed in these days, opens with the performance of *Grihya Yajna* or sacrifices offered to the planets which according to Matsya Purāṇa are a necessary preliminary for the efficacy of all optional (*kāmya*) religious rites. Another preliminary rite consists of the performance of *Vridhi-Srādhā* or *Nāndeemukha* which has to be performed on every occasion of prosperity. The specific ceremonies begin with the division of the ground-plan of the house into eighty-one squares by drawing ten lines from east to west and ten others from north to south. In some cases, the aggregate of squares is called *Vāstumandala*. The large square is supposed to correspond to the body of Vāstunara, and its component squares are taken to represent particular limbs and organs which, in accordance with the mythical story already noticed, are believed to be the seats of particular divinities who are worshipped therein.¹

The *hómam* (sacred fire) which has next to be performed in this connection is the connecting link between the rituals of the Vedās and the Purāṇas (Matsya Purāṇa). *Vishnu-dharmottara* directs Vastupathī *mantrams* to be recited at the sacrifice to the house-god and at all stages of the ceremony. The oblation of milk, rice, and sugar seems to be very much favoured.² According to *Dēvi Purāṇa*, the worship of the Vastumandala ought to be followed by the consecration of a water vessel in the middle of Vāstumandala sacred to Brahma and the water from the same has to be poured on the ground following the lines which make on the smaller squares. Finally, a pit, one cubit square and four fingers deep, is made in the middle and is plastered with cow-dung and sandal paste. The worshipper then meditates on Brahma and, pouring the water from the sacred vessel into the pit, throws flowers into it. If they float to the right, the omen is good; if otherwise, bad luck will ruin the family. The pit is then filled up with sacred

1. If the Vāstumandala cannot be prepared, on the authority of the Padmapuranam, the worship of the presiding deities is to be performed before the sacred Saligramam stone. It is considered that the Gods, Asuras, Yakshas, as well as the fourteen worlds are all present at the place where Vishnu is present in the form of that stone.

2. Matsya Purana.

grains and pure earth from the fields. On the conclusion of the ceremony, the officiating priest is given a present of a few rupees and a pair of cloths. The worshipper then goes through the usual ablution which is enjoined after the performance of every sacrifice, and feasts the Brahmans.

The selection of persons for marriage is guided mainly by two rules; firstly, that they must be outside the family; secondly, that they must be inside the caste. The first of these rules is only a survival of that singular prohibition against marriage between persons of the same family or tribe which is to be found in almost every part of the world and to which Mr. Mc Lenan has given the name of 'exogamy'. According to the Hindu *sastras*, persons who are related as *sapindas*¹ cannot marry. This relationship extends to six degrees where the common ancestor is a male; but there is a difference of opinion as to the rule when the common ancestor is a female. Manu² and Apastamba³ extend the prohibition in the latter case also to six degrees, while Gautama⁴, Vishnu⁵, Vasishta⁶, Sankha⁷, Narada⁸ and Yagnavalkya⁹ limit it to four degrees.

To this restriction is also added another rule that the parties to the marriage should not be of the same *gotra* or *pravara*, i. e., they must not be of the same family nor invoke the same ancestor. Conjugal relationship between first cousins is seldom allowed. The members of a vedic family avoid matrimonial alliances with those of a non-vedic, but among their various sections inter-marriage is generally in vogue; and marriage among the various subdivisions of the non-vedic community is endogamous. The most important Nambudhiri *grāmams* (villages) inhabited by the vedic members are Perummanam, Irinjalakuda and Venganad. Between the members of the first village south of Trichur, and those of the second, there is no inter-marriage; and this restriction does not

1. Beginning from the bride or bridegroom and counting exclusive of both six or four degrees upward according as the relationship with the common ancestor is reached within the aforesaid degrees on both sides, the persons so related are known as Sapindas.

2. Chap. III, Verse 5.

3. Chap. II, Verses 5, II.

4. Chap. IV, Verses 2-5.

5. Chap. XXIV, Verses 9-10.

6. Chap. VIII.

7. Chap. IV, Verse 1.

8. Narada, Chap. XII, Verse 7.

9. Yagnavalkya, Chap. I, page 52-53.

concern those of the first said village north of Trichur. It is also said that Nambuthiris of South Malabar seldom marry girls of the families of the same status from North Malabar, while no objection is held against girls being given in marriage to their caste-men in North Malabar. Among the Nambuthiris as a class, only the eldest son is allowed to marry, and this custom has long been in force to keep the family property intact and to prevent its disintegration by partition which the marriage of the younger sons might necessitate. It is only under exceptional circumstances that the second or other junior members enter into wedlock with women of the same caste. Very often the absence of a son to the eldest married brother and the necessity of providing the girls with husbands lead a junior member to enter into conjugal relationship with a girl of the same caste. In the latter case he marries the sister of the man who marries the sister of the former with a view to avoid the payment of heavy dowries. As a rule, however, the junior members enter into *sambandham* with the young women of other castes below them up to the high caste Nayers. A kind of mixed marriage sometimes takes place among them in some parts of the State. A girl of vedic parentage is, owing to poverty or other causes, allowed to be married to a young man of the non-vedic class. The girl, by this union, is supposed to lose her status; for, after she has commenced to live with her husband in his own house, she is forbidden to mingle freely with the members of her own family, or take part in the ceremonies performed there. In cases where a young man cannot get a suitable wife, he may marry the daughter of his maternal uncle, after he has taken a ceremonial bath, which signifies that all relationship with her has ceased, and that she, like any other, is eligible to enter into conjugal relationship with him. In the selection of a bride or bridegroom, the caste-men pay special attention to the following:— That the girl is free from bodily and mental defects, that she belongs to a respectable family, that she inherits the virtues of ten generations, is younger in age, and is a bride that has not been promised to any one else, and that the bridegroom is endowed with all accomplishments, is of the same caste, and social standing, is well read in the Vedas, is youthful, intelligent, and agreeable.

Nambuthiri girls are married both before and after they reach the age of puberty. They have no voice in the choice of their husbands, whom their parents or elder brothers choose for them. When a girl is to be married, her father, or her brother in his absence, selects a suitable young man whose horoscope he obtains and submits to a learned astrologer. In the event of a proper agreement between his horoscope and that of the girl and a favourable decision being given by the astrologer, the bridegroom's father is approached. If he approves of the match, he is invited to talk the matter over in the presence of friends and relations of both sides, when the bridegroom's price is also ascertained. Sometimes many days, even months, pass before the fathers agree as to the sum of money, which should be paid by the bride's father to the bridegroom. The sum varies from 1,000 to 2,000 rupees in ordinary well-to-do families and from 4,000 to 5,000 rupees among the Adyans of the aristocratic families. University degrees and other similar qualifications, which command a high price in the matrimonial market among the east coast or *Paradesi* Brahmans, count for nothing in the case of the Nambuthiri bachelors. Property is the only consideration, and every detail bearing on status and respectability of the family increases the price, the bride's father will have to pay.

From the date on which the settlement is made, the girl is regarded as betrothed, which is only a kind of contract entered into by the bride's and the bridegroom's fathers in the presence of some respectable members of the community, and seldom revoked. On this point, Manu says, "Neither ancients nor moderns who were good men have ever given a damsel in marriage after she had been promised to another man."¹ But Nárada and Yágnavalkya admit the right of a father to annul the betrothal to one suitor, if a better match presents itself; and either party to the contract is allowed to withdraw from it where certain specific defects are discovered. But the former says that a man who wishes to withdraw from his contract without proper cause may be compelled to marry the girl even against his will. But it is now settled by legal decisions that contract to marry will not be specifically enforced, that the only remedy is an action for

1. Manu, Chapter IX, page 99,

A NAMBUTHIRI BRIDEGROOM

damages, and that all expenses resulting from the abortive contract would be recoverable by such an action. The word *betrothal* means a promise to marry, and it is often celebrated with much ceremony.

The auspicious day for the wedding being fixed, the ceremony begins by a few persons leaving the bride's *illam* to invite the bridegroom and his party. Before leaving his own *illam* or house, the bridegroom, after being shaved, adorns himself in his best, and with his friends and relations partakes of a feast, called *Ayalunu*¹, the expenses of which are defrayed by the bride's father. He makes the customary obeisance (*abhivádaya*)² to his elders (father, uncles, mother, aunts, teacher, family priest), and receives a cake and a garland from his mother who puts on his head some fried grains of paddy, as a token of blessing. Before starting, he makes a speech to those around him, goes round a cow, a bullock, a few of the sacred trees, and worships the tutelary deity; and on leaving the house with his party, as on all occasions, he must be careful to put his right foot first. He is also made to recite some verses of an auspicious nature called *mangala súktams* and *swasthi súktams*. Should he at starting meet an owl, a dog, or a cat, he should pass on their left; should he, however, see a fox, a monkey, a kite or a mongoose, he must recite certain *mantrams* and make a few gifts to the Brahmans on reaching his destination³. With him go a number of Nayars, his *adiyars* (those who count him as their liege lord), and of these, some brandish swords, the emblem of the Adyan Nambuthiri of Malabar. The *drpu* and *kurava* (shouts of men and women) are among the characteristic features in the procession. At the gate of the bride's *illam* a number of Nayar ladies dressed as the

1. *Ayalunu*—The bridegroom, facing the east, sits on a plank in front of a large plantain leaf on which are served rice and curries. A lighted lamp and the eight auspicious articles (*Ashtamangalyam*) are placed in a conspicuous place near him. An offering to Ganapathi is also made, when his mother says:—"Eat well and mayst thou be blessed with conjugal happiness."

2. *Abhivadaya*—The following statement is made when the bridegroom-elect prostrates before his elders:—"Nilakanta Sarma (his name) aham asmi bhau: I, Nilakanta Sarma, prostrate before thee." To this the following reply is made:—"Swasthi-ayushman-bhava-sowmya-Nilakanta Sarma: Oh mild Nilakanta, mayst thou live long." He makes the customary obeisance (*abhivadaya*) to his elders (father, uncles, mother, aunts, teacher and family priest).

3. *Mahabharata*, *Anusasana Parva*, hap. CL, verses 65-68, page 328.

Nambuthiri women of the family (for, the latter cannot appear on account of their being *goshas*) welcome and receive him with *ashtamangalyam* and lighted lamps.

The bridegroom elect enters the court-yard outside the house, and after washing his feet and reciting *mangala sūktams* takes his seat in the *purattalam* or entrance hall on a plank facing east; then the bride's father dressed in tattoo form, sitting in front of him and clasping him by the right hand, invites him to wed his daughter (*Kulichu Vekkuḱa*, bathe and marry)—an invitation which he formally accepts by saying "amim—yes". After his bath, he returns clad in the tattoo form; and washing his feet and putting on a ring of *darbha* or *kusa* grass (*Eragrostis cynosuroides*), resumes his seat in the usual eastward position. He first performs a *puja* to Ganapathi and *Gramadevatha* (village deity) by placing a few annas near a lighted lamp (*velakkattu panam vekkuḱa*). He then invites four Brahmans, and gives each of them a few annas with betel leaves and arecanuts. This ceremony, which is called *Asramavichcheda Prāyaschittam*, is performed in expiation of any sins which may have been committed during his bachelorhood.

The ceremony of *Nāndeemukha* is next performed in propitiation of the minor deities or a class of gods called *Viswedevas* concerned in *Sradh* and the departed manes (*pitris*), when similar gifts are made to four Nambuthiris who are regarded as representing them. Bringing the Ganapathi *puja* to an end, he removes the *kusa* ring and washes his hands.

The next ceremony is the *punnyaham* (consecration of water), for which again four Nambuthiris are invited and seated on planks in front of the bridegroom elect. They are given flowers, sandal paste, etc., and a bell-metal vessel containing water is placed in their midst and propitiated. Wearing the *kusa* ring and touching the vessel with the *kusa* grass, they recite vedic hymns which are believed to sanctify the water. This sanctified water is to be sprinkled on him with a view to make fit to perform the wedding ceremonies. He takes off the *darbha* ring, washes his feet, puts on the caste marks and again replaces the ring.

The bridegroom then enters the *nadumittam* with a Nambuthiri carrying a lamp before him, and takes his seat on a low wooden stool (*peedham*), when a Nayar woman waves round his

body from behind, a vessel of water with sugar dissolved in it. The bride's father makes obeisance to him (*abhitadaya*), and is saluted in the same way. He gives the bridegroom a vessel of water with which he performs his *âchamana* (sipping of water with the aid of palm), and receives from him four double lengths of cloths to be given to the bride, who, taking two of them for her own wearing, returns the other two for him to put on.

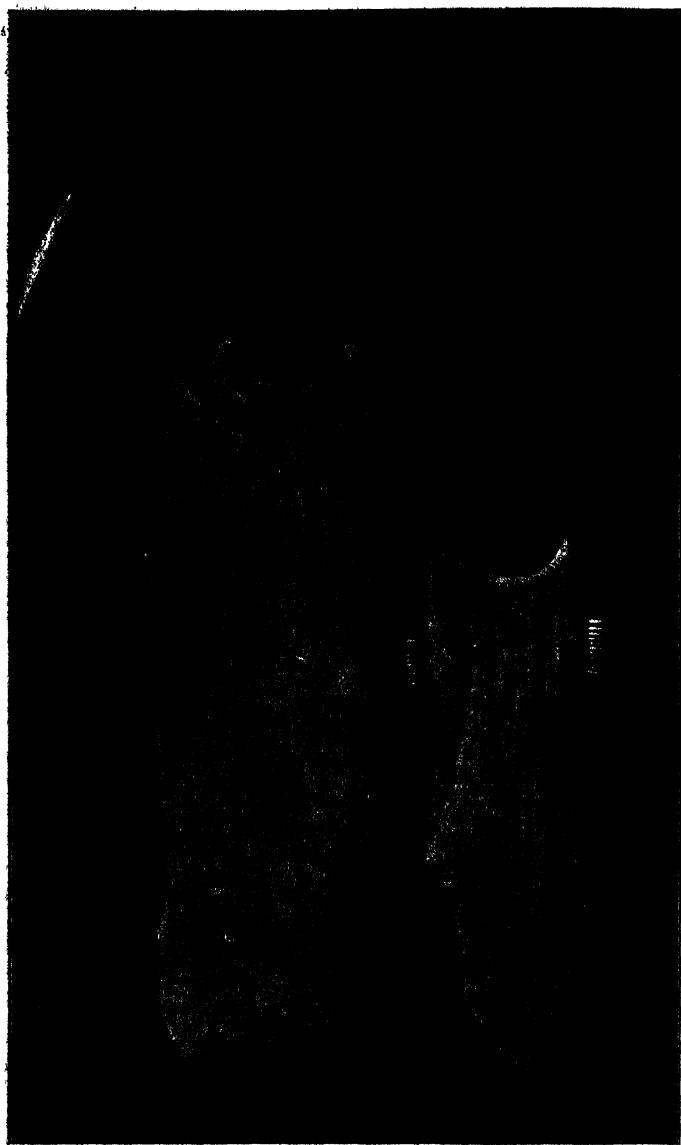
The bridegroom, clad in the new garments, putting on the caste marks and *kusa* ring, is then conducted to the wedding apartment to prepare the *hómam* (sacred fire) for which he sits on a plank facing the east, and smears with cow-dung a part of the floor having the dimension of an arrow, *i. e.*, about two feet square. He washes his hand and wears the *darbha* ring. With a piece of jack-wood (*sakalam*) he draws six lines, one turned to the north through the west (of the spot on which fire is to be placed), two lines turned to the east at the two different ends (of the line mentioned first), three lines in the middle of those two. It is then ignited by the fire brought from the bride's *illam*, when a gift of a few annas is made to a Brahman, and the flame is fed by a few pieces of *plásu* or *chamata* (*Butea frondosa*). With the recital of the prayers to the twelve vedic deities *Agni* (fire), *Pavamāna* (air), *Agni, Prajapathi, Agni Vayu, Surya, Prajapathi, Aryaman, Varuna, Pusha, Prajapathi, Agni-swishtakrit* more pieces of *plásu* are offered. His hands are, as usual, washed, and the *kusa* ring put on. The ground round the fire is purified with cow-dung and blades of grass are placed round the fire to the east, to the south, to the west, to the north (ending each time in the north). Then follows slightly the sprinkling of water round the fire. *Ajya* (ghee) in a vessel is then purified by two *kusa* blades with the measure of a span and unbroken tops. The fire thus prepared is the *Aupasana Agni*, which is believed to witness the marriage rite, and must be kept till the parties to the marriage breathe their last; and their funeral pyre is kindled from it. It is done by keeping a lamp lighted at the fire perpetually alight or by heating a *plásu* and putting it away carefully.

Three pieces of *plasu* called *paridhi*, and eighteen pieces called *edhmam*, tied together by a string of a *darbha* grass, are placed on the northern side of the altar on two pieces of

jack-wood. Round the altar are also placed four blades of *darbha* grass, a small bell-metal vessel, an earthen pot full of water, a pair of grind-stones (*ammi* and *ammikuzha*), a small winnowing pan containing parched paddy (*malar*) and a copper vessel of ghee with a sacrificed ladle made of *plásu*. With a formal ceremony involving the recital of holy *mantrams*, the sacred fire is preserved.

At this time the bride, who is completely veiled, is conducted to the *lizhakkini*, with a Nayar woman carrying the *áyirattiri* (a lamp with a thousand wicks). She waves this light round her face and retires, when the bride, facing the west, stands on the north-east side of the fire. The bridegroom, washing his hands, putting on the *kusa* ring and wearing the garland, resumes his seat in front of the fire. Here she is brought face to face with the bridegroom whom she honours by throwing flowers at his feet and presenting a garland, and they are required to gaze at each other in turns during the recital of vedic hymns, the translation of which is as follows:—
 “Be thou, mild eyed and friendly to me, do good to me and my kindred. Let thy heart be gentle and radiant. Bear living sons and worship the gods. Be of good repute. To my men and cattle bring thou happiness.” This is called *Mukhadarsanam* (face beholding or *Avayavasonirupanam*).

Meanwhile, in another apartment (*vadakkini*), the bride's father after washing his feet and putting on the *kusa* ring performs a *púja* to Ganapathi and other rites more or less similar to those performed by the bridegroom. The bride dressed and veiled in the cloths presented to her by her husband and with a *válkannadi* (bell-metal mirror) is conducted to the *vadakkini* where she is sprinkled with the sanctified water by her father and a few other Nambuthiris. With an offering to Siva and his consort Párvathi, the *táli* is then brought in a small vessel containing the sanctified water and placed by the side of the family deity to which daily worship is paid. After another *púja* to Ganapathi, the father ties the *táli* round her neck. Her mother gives her a *tulasi* (*Ocymum sanctum*) garland. This is followed by another important ceremonial—the handing over of the bride to the bridegroom. This is called *Udakapúrva Kanyakadánam*—the gift of the maiden with water, the most meritorious of all gifts. The bride



A NAMBUTHIRI LADY AND A BRIDE

and her father stand facing the west, with the bridegroom facing them, and all the three stretch out their right hands, the bride's hand being between the hands of the other two. The Nambuthiri priest pours some water into the right hand of the bride's father, and this goes into the bride's hand and thence into the bridegroom's. This is done three times, and the bride's father then recites the vedic *mantrams* "*Sahadharma Charta* (mayst thou tread the path of duty)" which is also uttered thrice, and gives to the bride the dowry which she in turn hands over to the bridegroom. The bride, then passing between him and the fire, sits on an *ammaṇa palaka* (a low wooden seat made of *chamara* and shaped like a tortoise) on the east of the altar, and the bridegroom seated on a similar *palaka* on her left, burning the *edham* except one piece of *plisu* and the *darbha* grass with which the bundle is tied, makes an oblation of ghee *āghāram*.

The bridegroom then rising from his seat, turns to the right and faces the bride, who with the mirror in her left hand stretches her right palm upwards with the fingers closed. This he clasps and takes his seat again. This clasping of the hand is *Pūṇigrahanam*, which is accompanied by the recital of certain *mantrams* and the blessings of the Brahmans assembled there.¹ The bride's brother or somebody else, clad in the tattoo form, takes the mirror from her hand and places it on the plank close by, so that she may see her own reflection in it. Then he leads her three times round the fire and the water-pot so that their right sides are turned towards the fire. While doing so, he murmurs certain vedic hymns, which may be translated thus: "This am I, that art thou; this I, that thou; the Heaven I, Earth thou; the Saman I, Rik thou; come, let us here marry. Let us beget offspring, be loving, bright with genial mind, may we live a hundred autumns." Each time after he has so led her round, he makes her tread on the stone with the words, "Tread on this stone; like a stone be firm; overcome the enemies; tread the foes down." Then a little ghee is poured into her joined hands, and two handfuls of fried paddy from the winnowing pan added to it then, is three times, little by little, brushed

1. If her thumb is seized, male children may be born to him; if her other fingers, female children only; if the hand on the side together with the thumb, both male and female children.

into the fire. This is called *Lājahomam*, at the conclusion of which the bridal pair go round it, passing outside the *kumbham* (water-pot) but not the grind-stone and pan. The substance of the hymns recited at the time is: "May Aryaman, Pushan, Agni, Varuna, to whom the girl has sacrificed with parched paddy, relieve her from other occupations and help her to unite with her husband to enjoy the happy conjugal life." There is also another important part of the ceremony called *Asmārōhanam*, which symbolises immutability. The bride and the bridegroom stand west of the grind-stones, and her right foot is lifted thereon by the bridegroom; then taking her feet one by one, he places them on the stones, and then grasps her feet and the stones with both hands. *Lājahomam Pradakshinam* (going round the fire) and *Asmārōhanam* are each repeated thrice. This is followed by another important rite called *Saptapati* or seven paces, for which the bridegroom holding the bride by the hand leads her seven steps (one for force, two for strength, three for wealth, four for well-being, five for offspring, six for sons, seven for friends) and then advises her to be devoted to him, and bear him many sons who may live long. The following is the translation of the hymns recited for the *Saptapati*:—"Now we have taken seven steps together, be thou my companion. Let us be companions. Let me have thy companionship. May I never part from thee. Let us be united. Let us always take counsel together with glad hearts and mutual love. May we grow in strength and prosperity together. Now are we one in minds, deeds, and desires". Then the bridegroom unlooses the two braided tresses of hair, one of each side of the top of the bride's head, repeating the vedic text: "I loose thee from the fetters of Varuna with which the very auspicious Savitri has bound thee."¹ They then pass between the grind-stones and the fire, and seat themselves on the west of the earthen pot facing the east, the bride behind the bridegroom. Then their heads are brought into close juxtaposition, and the bridegroom sprinkles himself and the bride with water from the pot.²

They then return to the seats west of the altar and face north, ostensibly to look at the pole-star (Druvan), the star

1. Rig Veda X. 85, 24.

2. Aswalyana Grihya Sutra, Chap. I, Kandika 7-9.

Arundhati, and the seven *Rishis*¹ (*Ursa Major*) which the bridegroom is supposed to point out to the bride, while he teaches her a short *mantram* invoking the blessing of a long life on her husband.

The bridegroom then makes two other oblations (*Suśhita-krit homam* and *Dharmi homam*), pouring ghee on the sacred fire, on which he places the *paridhis*, the remaining *edhams*, *darbha* grass and the rest of the ghee. The bridegroom removes the *kusa* ring, puts on marks of holy ashes (*bhasmam*) and terminates the *pūja* to Ganapathi.

These in brief are the various items of the religious portions of the wedding ceremony, according to Aswālayana Grihya Sutra, at the bride's house, of which *Saptapati* forms the binding portion, but among Nambuthiris, *Udakapūrvam* and *Panigrahanam* are also the most important. It must be noted that the *Mangalya Sūtram* or the tying of the *tali* (marriage badge) is nowhere among the Brahmans looked upon as a marriage rite, though the popular belief is otherwise. Among the Nambuthiris, the father ties the *tali* round the girl's neck, while among other classes of Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and even among most of the Sudras, the bridegroom does it at the auspicious hour.

After the first day's ceremony in the bride's house, the bridegroom and his party take the bride together with the sacrificial fire to his own *illam*, (if it is close by), for which the ceremony—*Aupāsanam Kāchukal*, or the preparation of the sacrificial fire—must have been performed as the last, in the bride's *illam* (house), and the particulars of which are given here. A piece of *chamata*, six inches in length, is held in the right hand, and twelve similar bits of *kusa* grass in the left hand; and the former is heated in the *Aupāsana Agni* with the recital of a vedic hymn which signifies:—“May the sacred all-knowing fire get into the *chamata* twig and give us happiness”. The two along with the wooden ladle (*sruvam*) are tied and neatly packed in the spathe of an areca palm to be used in his *illam*. After their arrival here the *chamata* is ignited, and the *darbha* grass and ghee are offered. This is called *Aupāsanam Idūkal*, for which the sacred

1. Kasyapa, Atri, Bharadwaja, Viswamitra, Gauthama, Jamadagni, Vasishtha.

altar is prepared in much the same manner as before. Then a similar *hómam* called *randam* or second *homam* is also prepared in the following manner. Having given its place to the nuptial fire, and having spread to the west of it, a bull's hide with the neck to the east and with the hair outside, the bridegroom makes oblations, while the bride sits on that hide and takes hold of him, with the four verses, "May Prajapathi create offspring to us" (Rig Veda X, 85-43 seq.). Verse by verse and with the verse "May all the gods unite" (Rig Veda X, 85-47), he partakes of curds and gives thereof to her or he besmears their two hearts with the rest of the *Ajya* (ghee) of which she has sacrificed.

The bridal pair then spend a few moments closeted together in the same room, she lying down on a skin spread over a piece of new cloth on the floor, and he sitting by her side on an *ammaṇa palaka*. This is called *Dikshatverikkukal*. After sunset also is performed the *Aupāsana hómam*, the offerings of *chamata*, and *Viswadeva homam*, i. e., offerings of boiled rice. The latter may be performed then or postponed to the next afternoon, if they cannot, for want of time, be performed on the wedding day. The performance of these ceremonial offerings has to be continued throughout their life-time. The first three days on which these *hómams* are performed are the days of mourning (*deeksha*) during which the dress is not changed. Aswalayana says:—"From that time they should eat no saline food, they should be chaste, wear no ornaments, sleep on the ground three nights or twelve nights or even one year. The underlying idea of this enforced *Brahmacharyam* is that abstinence in the immediate vicinity of the exciting cause brings merit to the parties. The longer the temptation is resisted, the greater the reward in the character of the offspring."

On the fourth day the conjugal pair have an oil-bath, and the *deeksha* is considered to be at an end. The Vaiswadeva ceremony is next performed. After performing the usual *Aupāsanam* in the evening, the formalities for the *Sékam* (nuptials) are begun. The God Ganapathi is then adored. The bride is conducted to the bridal chamber at the auspicious hour, when, at the bidding of a Nayar woman, who standing at the door says, "*akattu ezhunnellénun*, (Mayst thou go

inside)"; the bridegroom visits her with two jasmine garlands, one of which is put on the lamp in the south-east corner of the room and other round the bride's neck. He then rubs the upper part of the body with an ointment known as *chāntu*; and she herself smears the lower part. They then come out, bathe, dress themselves neatly and take a dose of the sanctified water. After a few other ceremonies, they eat from the same leaf. Actual cohabitation begins that night. They generally require an auspicious hour for the nuptials on the fourth night, and if that night is not auspicious, some other night is chosen. The nuptial couch for the bridal pair is but a grass mat or a coarse country blanket covered with a white sheet with a little ridge of rice and paddy signifying plenty. The final ceremony is the *hōmam* called *Sthūlipākam*, which is performed on the day after the full-moon day and after the second *hōmam*. If the full-moon is at the full *nāshika* before sunset or earlier, it may be celebrated on the full-moon itself.

Among the Nambuthiris who follow *Bōdhyaṇa grihya sūtra* the bridegroom wears the *kankanam* (a string round the wrist of his right hand) and carries a bamboo with sixteen points symbolical of their married state. The bridegroom and the bride are said to catch fish about the size of minnows called in Malayalam *mannathukanni* (eyes looking upwards), in a pot of water with a piece of cloth as net. They then anoint each other with oil and the bride combs the bridegroom's hair, and in the evening the bridegroom adorns the bride with flowers and makes her look into a mirror. On the sixth or the tenth day, a few Brahmans are treated to a feast to please the deities. The couple then go to an *udumbara* tree under which some rice, curd and ghee are placed in some *kusa* grass, and an offering is made of flowers and sandal-wood. The *kankanam* is removed, and the bamboo staff, the arrow and the mirror used during the ceremonies are given to the priest (*Vādhyān*) and the wedding is practically over.

Among the Nambuthiris who follow the *Ṛgveda grihya sūtras*, the following custom is in vogue. On reaching the house of the bridegroom, after the termination of the first day's ceremonies at the bride's *illam*, they resume the ceremonies before the sacred fire, that has been brought along with them; at one stage on the lap of the young wife is placed the son of a woman who has born only male children, and some

fruits are given to him. Then says the husband, "Ye fruits, that bear seeds, by your blessings may my wife bear likewise". Turning to her, he continues, "In the house of ours mayst thou be happy with children, study to fulfil the duties of the mistress of the house. Unite thy body with mine. Honour guests and tend the sacred fires with all care. When thou hast grown old after long years of happiness, thou shalt teach thy sons and grandsons the duties of worship and sacrifice."

Besides the form of marriage above described, there is another called *Sárswadánam* which may be celebrated under one of the three conditions. When a Nambuthiri breathes his last leaving his wife and a daughter behind him, the former may invite a Brahman to perform the funeral rite of her husband, after which she may make a gift of all her property along with the daughter duly married to him. If a Nambuthiri leaves only a daughter and distant *Sapindas*, one of the latter may be asked to perform the funeral ceremonies for which he may claim a share of the property of the deceased; and in such a case the rest of the property is given as a gift to the suitable Brahman, the gift being also given in marriage to the same man. In the absence of any distant relative to give away the girl, a close neighbour performs the functions of a father (by giving her in marriage to a suitable young man). The result of such a union is that, if a son is born, he inherits the property, and is, for all practical purposes, the son of his deceased father-in-law. If there is no male issue or on the death of such an issue, the property of the wife's family does not belong to the husband, but reverts to the family of the father-in-law.

The marriage custom above described appears to be the survival of a custom in vogue among the Brahmans in ancient times, according to which, a father, who, having no male issue, gave his daughter to a young man, and appropriated to himself the son born of such a marriage, either by agreement or by a mere act of intention on his part without any consent asked for or obtained.¹ Hence it was that a man was warned not to marry a girl without brothers, lest her father should take her first son as his own.² Vasishta quotes a text of the Vedas as showing that "the girl who has no brother,

¹ Mayne's Hindu Law, page 77.

² Gautama XXVIII, 29, 30, Manu III, 11.

comes back to the males of her own family to her father, and the rest. Returning she becomes their son.¹ In her case, therefore, the father seems to have retained his dominion over her to the extent of being able to appropriate her son if she wished it. The same result, of course, is followed where the marriage took place with an express agreement that this dominion should be reserved.²

Marriage among the Thazhakkat Ammomans:—There is in the northernmost part of North Malabar, an old village called Payyanur inhabited by a class of Nambuthiris known as *Ammomans* (maternal uncles) among whom inheritance is matrilineal. There were once sixteen flourishing families, all of which are now extinct with the exception of four, namely, (1) *The Thazhakkat Mana*, (2) *The Peramangalath Mana*, (3) *The Kunna Mangalath Mana*, (4) *The Kunnath Mana*. The members of the first two families are *sapindás* and are not, on that account, eligible for marriage, but they and those of the other two may inter-marry. The families, though matrilineal have the same form of marriage as that prescribed for other Nambuthiris, with slight variations. There are not males enough to marry their young women, and at the same time, Nambuthiris of other villages consider it a degradation to enter into matrimonial alliances with them; for after marriage, they are not allowed to mingle with the members of their own families. Consequently, when a girl in one of the above families has to be married, a poor vedic Nambuthiri of another village is adopted into another of these surviving families, and is then induced to marry the girl by a tempting offer of money and other comforts. The marriage customs are in accordance with the *Bódháyana grihya sutras*, but after the performance of *Pánigrahanam* and *Lájahomam*, the bridegroom makes a pretence of taking the bride to his own house for the performance of the remaining conjugal ceremonies. A member of the bride's family then requests him to go back to her house and stay there and promises that he, with the bride and the children of that union, will be supported during their life-time out of the family funds. The remaining ceremonies are gone through during the next three days, after which the husband resides in the family of his wife during her lifetime. A woman by this union cannot, either by divorce or, after the death of

¹ Vasishtha, XVII, 12.

² Baudhayana II, 12.

her husband, mate with another. The customs are mostly Brahmanical though the inheritance is in the female line. The origin of this custom is ascribed to Parasurama, who, for the sake of the Sudras, induced the Brahmans to follow the inheritance in the matrilineal line, and all refused to do so except those of the Payyanur village, and the only families of this kind now existing are the wealthy *Thazhakkât Mana* and a few others of the said village.

post puberty marriage among the Nambuthiris and the causes that lead to marriage before puberty.

The vedic *mantrams* recited at the various stages of the wedding ceremony, other portions of the vedic texts ¹ early *Grihya* and *Dharma Sūtras* ² of *Sāṅkhayana Aswalāyana*, *Jaimini*, *Bauddhayana*, and others, as also the *Smṛithis*, of *Manu*, *Nārada*, and puranas ³ bear unmistakable evidence to the fact that Brahman girls were married after puberty during the vedic age. Instances are found of young women who enjoyed the right to exercise the choice of husbands for themselves. Marriage then was as optional with the female as with the male sex, and there are instances of young women who remained with their parents unmarried, either rendering filial service or doing penance and speculating on the absolute ⁴. But towards the end of what Mr. Dutt calls the Epic age, the practice of marrying girls before puberty began to make its appearance. Gobila, Vasishta, Gautama and others advocated the marriage of girls either before puberty or within the first three years thereafter, which was subsequently modified into three *ritus*; ⁵ if left unmarried beyond that time they might themselves arrange a marriage with a suitable young man. The whole question, however, is one of conjecture.

It is said that apparently since Ushastis and Chakrayana's time, an influential sect had grown up who approved of early marriage. The view that the girls should be married before puberty developed partly from the fear of their defilement, and

1. Marriage after puberty, by V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, pp. 24-27

2. Do. Do. pp. 28-37

3. Do. Do. pp. 36-37, 72, 70-74.

4. Do. Do. pp. 24-25

5. *Ritus*. (a) Vedavyasa Ch. II, verse 7. If owing to neglect of her guardian, maiden attains puberty he incurs the sin of embryo murder at each *ritu* and becomes a *patita* (fallen from purity).

(b) Yama Chap. 3, verses 18-22. If, a girl remaining unmarried in her father's house attains puberty, he incurs the sin of embryo murder, she is a *Sudra*.

(c) *Vide Samhitas of Sankara*, Chap. 15. - *Angiraa* verses 126-128.

partly because of the belief that the neglect of parents to provide husbands for their daughters who were fit to conceive and who, being eligible for marriage, was tantamount to an embryo murder at each *ritu*. Considerations such as these, began to assert themselves, and were laid hold of by the later *Smṛiti* writers, who began to lay down elaborate rules regarding matrimonial alliances before puberty, and the idea of the embryo murder, already referred to, was much exaggerated. The custom of post nubile marriage was not yet condemned wholesale, but gradually owing to the altered conditions in the later periods, the view that marriage should take place before puberty became generally held. Yama, Parāśara, Saṃvartha and other writers prohibited the custom of post nubile marriage, showering curses upon the delinquent parents for their negligence and proclaiming all of them to be out-castes. They also mentioned the rewards that went to parents who gave their daughters in marriage before they reached puberty, and emphasised the gifts of them before puberty as producing great merits, the principal motive being not their conjugal happiness, but the father's spiritual gain. The religious idea of the time, such as the importance of purity of birth, and the chastity of the mother, grand-mother and the great grand-mother, whose names a Brahman has to pronounce on the *śradha* day favoured this change. Thus, the gradual lowering of the position of women from the standard of the vedic times, and the distrust of their virtue induced by the example of prematrimonial license set by the Dravidian races, must have had its effect. These facts are not obscurely hinted at in the literature of the subject, and girls were, as at present, married before puberty in order to avoid the possibility of causing scandal later on.¹ When once the custom of infant marriage had been started under pressure of social necessity by the families of the highest groups, a fashion was set which was blindly followed by other groups.

The custom of post nubile marriage is at present found to be in vogue among the Kanyakubja Brahmins of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, the Kulin Brahmins of Bengal, and the Nambuthiris of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. It is perhaps a relic of the custom which once prevailed among their ancestors of Northern India. This practice was at one time discontinued even by Nambuthiris, but it is said,

revived by *Mēlattōl Agnihōtri*, who set an example by his marriage with a girl after she had reached the age of puberty. Since then that custom has been in vogue. It is often said that the marriage of girls after puberty among Nambuthiris is due to a superfluity of girls consequent on the marriage of only the eldest son in their families, and that the influence of hypergamy which gives rise to a vigorous competition for bridegrooms in the upper groups, the disappearance of the old custom of bride price, the appearance of the increased bridegroom's price¹ as in all classes of Brahmans everywhere, and the inability on the part of poor parents on account of their scanty means to get their daughters married in time, are the more probable causes why the limit of the marriageable age is beyond the age of puberty. But these facts do not concern the Nambuthiris alone.

"To keep the family property impartible and to avoid having a large number of members in their families, the Nambuthiris, *Bhudevans* (Earth Gods) set up a rule that the eldest son alone should marry in their own caste, while the junior members should solace themselves by forming fugitive connections with the Sudra women. The ingenious arrangement exempts the younger brothers from the responsibility of supporting the children of their fugitive alliance, for these are looked after by the *karanavans* (senior males) of the women's families. The consequence is that, while a large number of the Nambuthiri juniors satisfy themselves with their alliances with Sudra women, an equally large number of Nambuthiri women, must live and die unmarried, vigilantly guarded in the privacy of their houses."

"Owing to the prevalence of the latter custom, Nambuthiri women enter into conjugal relationship at a very advanced age, or die in a state of celibacy, but so tenacious are they of observances that the corpse undergoes all the ceremonies of a marriage.² Many Nambuthiri women never get a chance of

1. In the year 997 M. E., the rulers of Travancore and Cochin, in consultation with the then British Resident, simultaneously issued a proclamation, by which the bridegroom's price (*Varadakshina*) for marriage among the Nambuthiris, was limited to 350 fanams. It does not appear to have been enforced at any time, and is still one of the unrepealed regulations of the State.

2. This is totally denied by the Nambuthiris during my investigations in the State.

marriage, but many of them unlike their Brahman sisters of the East Coast remain unmarried, and there are many who die as virgins at an advanced age. Numerous daughters are considered a misfortune as their dowry and other marriage expenses impoverish any but the wealthiest Nambuthiris. The custom which forbids the junior members from marrying in their own caste but encourages them in their fleeting alliances with the women of other castes, and which dooms most of the female members of their own caste to a life-long and enforced celibacy, is one which justice will not hesitate to condemn."

"If the reform movement, already set on foot by the educated Nayers in Malabar and Travancore, should have the effect of driving the Nambuthiri bachelors to enter into wedlock with the women of their own caste, there will be no difficulty in getting their superfluous women married in time. In that case, the aristocratic families, in which the Nayar women consort with the Nambuthiris, will have to form their *sambandham* alliances in their own caste.¹" In the Cochin State there is no such movement, and the communities are satisfied with the existing state of affairs.

When a Nambuthiri woman is about to become a mother, three ceremonies are performed for her at different stages of her pregnancy. The first of these is the *Garbhûdhânam* rite, and is also called *Chathurti karma*. In ancient times, the bridegroom could approach the bride only on the fourth night after the completion of the marriage ceremony.² During the previous day, the young married woman was made to look towards the sun or be in some way exposed to its rays. In the evening she was required to bathe, and her husband, performing the necessary ablutions, went through other prescribed forms of ceremonies. Before he approached his wife he had to recite certain prayers (vedic hymns), the translation of one of them is as follows:— "Let all-pervading Vishnu prepare her womb; let the Creator shape its forms, let Prajapathi be the impregnator; let the Creator give the embryo". This ceremony secures the unborn child from dangers; but it is not always done because it is not considered important.⁴

1. Malabar Marriage Commission report, pages 13-14.

2. The present interval of two, three or four years in some cases, no sanction of the Sutra writers and law-givers.

3. Rig Veda X. 186.

4. Religious Thought and life in India by Monier Williams, page 354.

The important rite (*Garbhādhānam*) is followed after an interval of three months by what is called *Pūmsavanam* (male production). It is performed during the third month of gestation before the period of quickening. According to Aswalayana, the wife is to keep a solemn fast, and after the performance of the usual sacrificial rite, a *pūja* to Ganapathi, and gifts to Brahmans, she is fed by her husband with two beans and a grain of barley mixed in three handfuls of curds, and made to pray three times for the birth of a male offspring. Some juice of *karuga* grass is also poured into her right nostril. A son to a pious Hindu is the first and the last of all necessary things. It is through him that he pays his own father the debt he owes him for his own life, and secures similar payment for the gift of life bestowed by himself. He sacrifices a mess of cooked food sacred to Prajāpathi, and touches his wife's heart, repeating the verse 'what is hidden, O thou, whose hair is well pared in thy heart, in Prajāpathi that I know; such is my belief. May I fall into distress?'¹ Another supplementary rite for the prevention of miscarriage is also customary in some localities. It is performed by sprinkling the juice of a stock of fresh darbha grass in the wife's right nostril with the repetition of certain *mantrams*. The ceremony is called *Anvalobhana*.

The last of the pregnancy rites is the *Seemantham* or parting of the hair which is generally performed in the fourth, sixth, or eighth month of pregnancy. In the fortnight of the increasing moon *i. e.*, when the moon, stands in conjunction with a *nakshatra* that has the name of masculine gender.

(After a *pūja* to Ganapathi and the performance of *Nāndi-mukha*, the husband gives its place to the *āṇḍasana* fire; and having spread to the west of it a bull's hide with the neck to the east, with the hair outside, he makes oblations, while his wife sits on that hide and taking hold of him repeats two verses, 1. the significance of which is, 'Prajāpathi generates these offspring, Let Dhātār with favouring mind bestow them, harmonious, like-minded, of like origin. Let the Lord of Prosperity put prosperity in me. He then three times parts her hair upwards (beginning from the front with a branch containing an even number of unripe fruits and with a porcupine's quill that

¹. Aswalayana Grihya Sutra, page 80, Sacred books of the East. Vol. XXIX.

has three white spots, and with three bunches of *kusa* grass with the words, Bhu, Bhuya, Svar Om').

Certain medical substances, supposed to have a purifying efficacy, are also given, and a particular regimen is prescribed for the remaining period of gestation. The promotion of cheerfulness in the mind of the mother is thought essential, and so, musical performances are sometimes given. These rites are performed at a woman's first pregnancy with a view to purifying her whole person and protecting the well-being of her unborn child. The underlying idea is that the body of the mother should be protected from evil influences at the most critical period of gestation, and that the period for the performance of them is in the third, fourth, sixth, or the eighth month.

The delivery of a Nambuthiri woman takes place on the bare floor. The umbilical cord is cut by a Delivery rites barber woman who is a midwife. Soon after delivery, the mother is taken to a tank and dipped in cold water, and she is tended and nursed by a Sudra woman for ten days. It is curious to note that the Sudra woman's touch or the taking of meals in her presence entails no pollution during the period of confinement. At other times this deviation from caste rules is highly reprehensible, and entails loss of caste. Each Nambuthiri family may have one or more Pariyappád families (families attached to them), depending upon and doing service to them, and the woman of such families are the personal attendants of the Nambuthiri woman. Garlic, pepper, and other bazaar stuffs, and sometimes medicinal herbs and plants dried and bruised are prepared in the form of a mixture, which is administered to her as medicine during this period. Her daily diet consists of nothing more than rice and rāgi boiled together. In the event of any serious illness, a *Vyidian* or physician is invited to treat her, who sits outside the room and gets all the necessary information through her maid servant. In this respect she is helpless. The physician can never see her or test in person the efficacy of his treatment.

Pollution lasts for ten days, and on the eleventh day, the mother and babe bathe and become purified after a purificatory ceremony. The sanctified water is sprinkled on her as well as the child and the mother also drinks a small dose of it. The

whole house and the close surroundings are purified with the same water, and the washerwoman supplies her with the newly washed cloths in which she is dressed. Only after forty days she is allowed to take part in all the ceremonies, and she approaches her husband only after ninety days. No gifts (*dánams*) are usual at the *punyáham* time.

Játakarmam :— Within ninety *naligas* (thirty-six hours)

after the birth of a child, its father has a look at its face, and he then bathes after which placing the child on his lap, he makes gifts to the Brahmans in propitiation of *Pitris* and *Vaiswadávas* as well as in celebration of the happy event. He then mixes a small quantity of ghee and honey together, and dissolving a little gold in it, and stirring it with a golden rod to symbolise good fortune, pours it down the throat of the child from a gold vessel. The act is accompanied with the recital of a few *mantrams*. The translation of which is as follows :—O! long-lived one, mayst thou live a hundred years in this world protected by the gods. Both the ears of the infant were then touched with the golden rod, and another *mantram* repeated. “May Savitri, may Saraswathi, may the Aswins grant thee wisdom. Lastly, the shoulders are rubbed and these words uttered :—“Become firm as a rock, sharp as an axe, pure as gold, thou art the Veda called a son, live thou a hundred years. May Indra bestow on thee his best treasures.” (Rig Veda II. 21, 6, III, 36—10.) If it is not done at this time, the ceremony cannot be performed until after the pollution is over.

Namakaranam.—This falls on the twelfth day after the birth of a child, but may also be celebrated on any auspicious day at an auspicious hour. After the usual preliminaries are gone through, the purificatory ceremony is performed a second time, in the middle of which, the father, placing the child on his lap and giving money presents to the Brahmans, whispers the name of the child, beginning with a consonant with a semi-vowel, with the *visarga* at its end, in Sanskrit in its right ear. This latter act is performed also by the mother in her turn. It must be mentioned that the thirteenth-day is not considered auspicious.

Nishkramanam.—During the fourth month after birth, a child is carried out in the open air during the fifth part of an auspicious day, and a ceremony is performed and gifts are

made to Brahmans. This is called *Nishkrāṇam*. A jack tree, *arikka plāvu*, is decorated, and the child is made to place its foot upon its root ; after this it is taken in-doors.

*Annaprāsana*m, or first ricegiving.—When the child is six months old, the ceremony of feeding with rice for the first time takes place. An auspicious day is chosen and after the usual preliminaries are gone through, the food is consecrated by means of holy texts. The child being laid upon the lap of the father, gifts of money are made to the Brahmans, and the child is fed with boiled rice, molasses, honey, ghee and water out of a silver vessel. During the process *mantrams*¹ are recited, and the significance of which is "Lord of food, give us food painless and strong ; bring forward the giver, bestow power on us on men and animals". For this ceremony the fifth and seventh months are considered inauspicious.

Chowlam.—This signifies the shaving of the child for the first time. It is performed both for boys and girls for the first time, during the third or the fifth year of their age. Sometimes it is postponed to the fifth year in the case of boys, and seventh year in the case of girls. In the case of boys the whole head is shaved except the tuft or *kuduma*. In the case of girls the ceremony consists of the removal of one or two hairs with a razor, though no objection is made even to shaving the head with the exception of an oval patch of hair on the top of the head. The *Māra*n acts as the barber and is presented with paddy, rice, cloth and money. A Sudra servant is also present, and he receives the shaven hair in his cloth, when the *Māra*n removes it by the razor. The child is then anointed with a little oil and *tālu* (soap) by a Sudra maid-servant of the family who bathes it subsequently. The man and the maid-servants of the Numbuthiri are the Sudras of the higher rank, and are known as *Illakkārs* without whose aid a Numbuthiri cannot get on. The ceremony is believed to have a purificatory effect on the whole character of the boy. According to *Aswālayana*, the child should be placed on the lap of its mother, to the west of the sacred fire. The father should take up his station to the south of the mother, holding in his hand twenty-one stalks of *kusa* grass, he should sprinkle on the head of the child three times a mixture of warm water, repeating the words *O ! Vayu come hither and with the formula 'May Aditi*

cut my hair, may the waters moisten thee for vigour!' He should then insert three stalks of *kusa* grass seven times into the child's hair on the right side, saying, 'O, divine grass! protect him', then he should cut off a portion of the hair and give it to the mother with the recitation of various texts,¹ leaving one lock (*sikha* or *chuda*) on the top of the head or sometimes three or five locks according to the custom of the family.

Karnavèdham.—This takes place after tonsure during the third or the fifth year of the child. Paràsara made it one of the purificatory ceremonies but Aswalayana and Gøbila conspicuously omit it. The boy is sumptuously fed and made to sit with his face towards the east, and a particular mantra, the last hymn of the *Saṁhita* Veda, is recited. It may be thus translated:—'Let us hear what is good with the ears, let us see what is good with the eyes.' Then the right ear-lobe is pierced. A different *mantram* is recited, a translation of which is given as follows:—'The bow-string, drawn tight upon the bow and leading to success in battle, repeatedly approaches the ear, as if embracing its friend, and wishing to say something agreeable just as a woman makes a murmuring sound (in her husband's ear.)' Then the left ear-lobe is pierced. This ceremony is sometimes performed on the day after birth or at the close of the first year or with the tonsure.

Vidhyārambham:—This is gone through either during the third or fifth year of the boy's age, but more commonly in the fifth year. The auspicious day generally chosen is the *Vijaya Dasami* or *Pūja-eduppu* day, i. e., the tenth day of the *Das ra*, but other good *muhurthams* are also known. The ceremony opens with a *pūja* to Ganapathi and money presents to Brahmans. The father or guardian of the boy initiates him into a knowledge of the letters. He takes the boy on his knees and writes the alphabet with a piece of gold (generally a gold ring) on his tongue, and whispers the sacred word in his ears. He is taught the fifty-one letters of the alphabet, the letters being

1. "The razor with which Savitri, the knowing one, has shaved (the beard) of kings Soma and Varuna, with that, ye Brahmans, shave now his (hair) that he may be blessed with long life, with old age.' 'With what Dhatri has shaven the head of Brahaspathi, Agni, Indra, for the sake of long life, with that I shave thy head for sake of long-life—of glory and welfare—thus a second time. By what he may at night further see the sun and see it long, with what I shave thy head for the sake of long life, of glory and welfare—thus a third time." *Aswalayana Grihya Sūtras* I, 17.

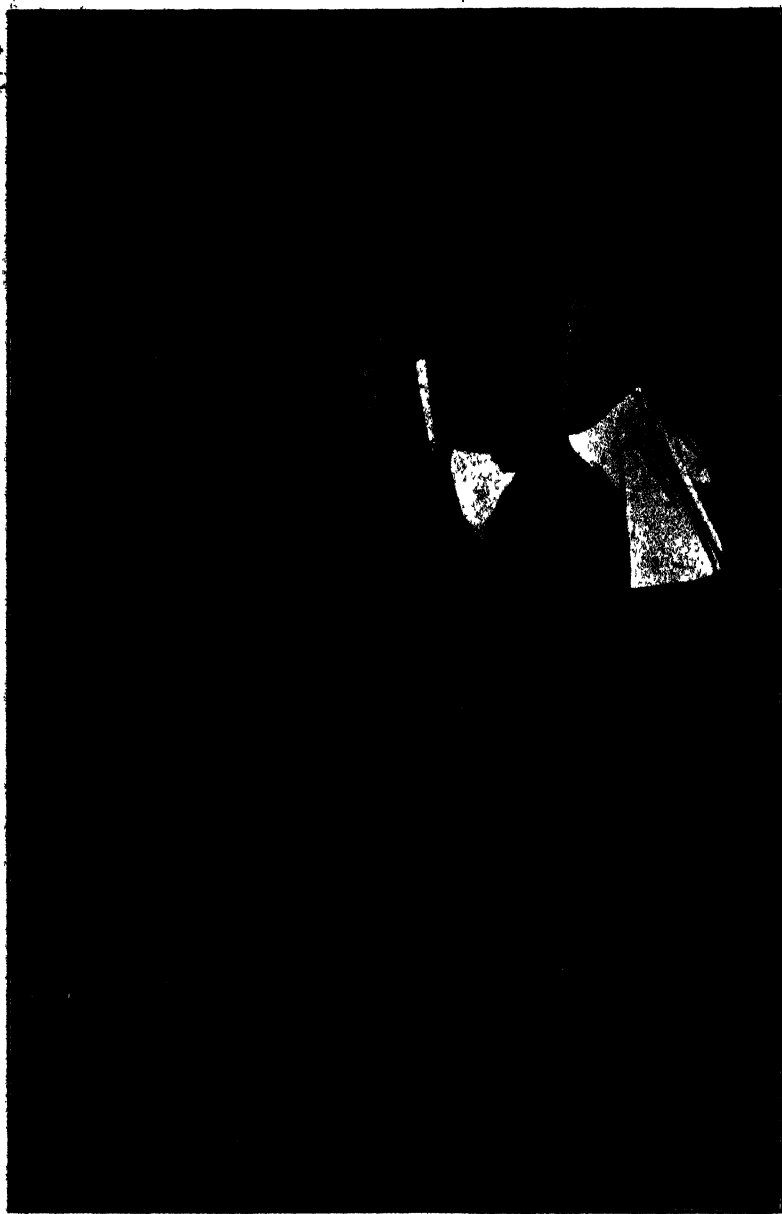
traced in rice by the father holding the ring finger of his son. The goddess Saraswati is herself propitiated, with offerings during the nine previous days of the festival. The letters first written are "*Hari Sri Gana Patha Ye nāmah*", an invocation to Vishnu, Lakshmi and Ganésa, the belief being that the intellectual attainments of a pupil can only be secured by the blessings of these gods.

With the object of obtaining high intellectual merits for children, parents give them butter sanctified by *mantrams* in the belief that it will promote their intellectual gifts. The high intellectual eminence of *Kákkasherry Bhattéry*, one of the most gifted of the Malabar Brahmans, is believed to have been attained in this manner. It is said that the Nambuthiris of Malabar were much dissatisfied with the best prize for scholarship, (a purse of money) being year after year carried away by a foreign Brahman, one *Uddanda Sástri* of *Chóla Désam*, on account of his undisputed superiority over the best Pandits of Malabar in Sanskrit sciences. This was a great mortification to the native Brahmans, who then devised a course of *mantrams* for producing in their own community, an intellectual giant. One of the most approved of the Nambuthiri families was fixed upon for the purpose, and the Brahman and his wife were put upon a regular course of diet and devotional exercises while thousands of Nambuthiris combined for *púja* and *japam*, and for a year communicated their effect to the daily food of the *Kákkasherry* couple. In due course a male child was born and upon it they built their hopes for defeating their foreign rival. The boy to be expected was brought up most carefully, and at the age of twelve, he satisfied their expectations. The competition for the Zamorin's prizes came as usual, and the famous *Uddanda Sástri* was there with his disciples. The Nambuthiri brought this young genius to compete with him. The proud *Sástri* was defeated by the young disciple and the latter won the prize to the astonishment and satisfaction of the whole community. This is an instance to prove the efficacy of the *mantrams* and prayers for the advancement of intellectual power. The *Kákkasherry Illam* cannot boast of ever having had another member of this type, but there are other gifted Nambuthiri families said to be recipients of similar blessings. The *Nárerí*, otherwise called *Kudallur Illam*, of the Chowaram village once popularly said to be one of

them and every male member of this family, both in times gone by, and within living memory, has been, and is even now, a profound scholar in the Rig Veda and Sanskrit Grammar *Vyākaranam*. The members of this *illam* belong to the chief Adhyan families and possess not only a local but an Indian reputation for learning, their names being well known to the scholars in Benares and Calcutta.

This is the leading or taking of a boy to his *Guru* or spiritual preceptor. This is the ceremony in which
Upanayanam. a Nambuthiri boy is invested with the holy-thread.¹ It takes place in his seventh or eighth year, and the performance of this ceremony makes him twice born *i. e.*, a Brahman. Without it he is considered no better than a Sudra. An auspicious day is chosen during the *Uttarayanam* period, *i. e.*, the six months during which the sun is to the north of the equator. On the morning of the auspicious day, the boy is bathed and is neatly dressed, and he puts on for the first time a *darba* ring. The priest and the boy sit facing east, and the former performs the usual *pūja* to Ganapathi with offerings, an expiatory ceremony (*Prāyścittam*), and *Nāndimukam* and makes gifts of a few annas to Brahmans. Then they throw off the *kusa* rings and wash their feet. The *Punyaham* ceremony is next performed, and the sanctified water is sprinkled on him. Taking a sumptuous meal at the hands of his mother as on the birthday, he stands in the central court-yard (*Nadumittam*) facing east, and rewards his teacher who blesses him. He soon gets himself shaved, bathes and wears a garment that has been not washed. The ceremony opens as usual with the worship of Ganésa at the western side of the sacrificial fire. Facing east with his father beside him, the boy is invested with the holy-thread to which is attached a piece of antelope skin (*Krishnājinam*) and a belt of *munja* grass is buckled on him. While the student takes hold of him, the teacher sacrifices and there stations himself to the north of the fire with his face turned towards the east. He then fills the two hollows of his own and the student's joined hands with water, and with the verse "That we choose of Savitri (Rig Veda- V.

1. The thread consists of three fine threads spun into one. It must be white, sixteen feet long, and fastened in a special knot which is called *Brahma-granthi*. It has to be consecrated by the recitation of the vedic texts which are partly *Gāytri* and other hymns from the Black Yajur Veda. At the same time holy water is sprinkled by means of the *kusa* grass.



A NAMBUTHIRI LAD AFTER UPANAYANAM (INVESTITURE OF
HOLY THREAD).

82-1), he makes with the full hollow of his own hands the water flow down on the full hollow of the student's hands. Having thus poured the water over his hands he should with his own hands seize his (the student's) hand together with the thumb with the (formula), 'By the impulse of God Savithri, with the arms of the two Aswins, with Pushan's hands I seize thy hand'. Then he says, "Savithri has seized thy hand a second time. Agni is thy teacher a third time." Then he is led to an open space where the priest directs him to look at the sun so that the pupils of his eyes may be covered with the sun's rays; next he goes to the sacrificial altar and offers sacrifices to the fire. The meaning of the verses recited at the time is thus translated. To Agni I have brought a piece of wood, and through that piece of wood, increase thou O Agni; through the Brahman may we increase *Swaha*! Having put the fuel on the fire, and having touched it, he threetimes wipes off his face with the words, "With splendour I anoint myself. On me may Agni bestow insight, on me offspring, on me splendour. On me may Indra bestow insight, on me offspring, on me strength and so also may Surya (sun) bestow them on me. What thy splendour is, Agni, may I thereby become resplendent. What thy vigour is, Agni, may I become vigorous. What thy consuming power is, Agni, may I thereby obtain consuming power."¹ With these formulas he should approach the fire, bend the knee, embrace the teacher's feet and say to him "Recite The Savithri, Sir recite". At his request, initiates him into the mysteries of the *Sāvitrī mantrams*, by uttering into the right ear, the sacred letter (Om) which is known as '*Pranavam*' or the primeval sound from which the whole manifested creation is believed to have developed, and then recite the *gāyitrī mantram* firstly *pada by pada* (syllable), then hemistich by hemistich, and finally the whole verse. The boy is then made to recite as far as he is able. The *Guru* then teaches the pupil certain maxims of conduct to be pursued and respected by him throughout his *Brahmacharya* stage. The boy has now become a Brahman qualified for the study of the Vedas and the performance of all the duties appertaining to the *āśrama* or stage he is about to enter. He must not sleep during the day, but must under the tuition of his *guru* devote his attention to the vedic studies. Advice to this effect, though spoken in sanskrit, at the time, is also given in Malayalam so as to appeal to the understanding of the

young disciple, a custom unknown to the Brahmans of the East Coast. With these words of advice, he is given a *dandu* or stick, and he makes obeisance to his parents and others assembled. He next receives a brass vessel *bhikshapátram* (alms spot) for providing himself with food during the Brahmacharya stage. He goes to the kitchen of his own house with the brass pot in one hand and the stick in the other; making obeisance in due form to his mother, and while standing facing the east, he says 'Bhavati Bhikshám Dadhatu' (mayst thou be pleased to give me alms.) The mother places five or seven handfuls of rice in the vessel, and after receiving similar contributions from the others assembled there, he goes to his guru or preceptor and says 'Bhikshamidam' (this is the collection of my alms): the guru then blesses it and says 'may it be good'. After the *gayatri* japa, there is a ceremony of *Samidhadhanam* corresponding to the *aupasanam* of the *Grihasta*, and this has to be performed twice both in the morning and after sunset every day. Another *hómam* called *Anupravakaniya* sacrifice *i. e.*, the sacrifice performed after the study of a part of the Veda, takes place during night, for which the boy prepares *Brahmadàna* or cooked food and the teacher should sacrifice it to the Savitri, a second time, to the Rishis, a third time, to Agni a fourth time and lastly to the Brahmans who pronounce the end of the vedic study. The cloth that covers the *Krishnajina* and the sacred thread is removed, and the consecration of his food is then performed for the first time.

On the fourth day begins the boy's initiation into the vedas (*Othu thudangal*), and from that time, he leads the life of a Brahmachari or celibate student of the vedas, seeing none but his teacher or guru, and wearing only the *Krishnájina* and the *Mékhalam* till the performance of the *Samavarthana* ceremony which marks the completion of his studies and his return to domestic life (*Grihasta*.) This form of orthodoxy prevails to a great extent unimpaired even to this day in most of the high dignified or aristocratic Nambuthiri families.

Brahmacharya period :—The boy's studentship begins immediately after *Upayanam* and during the whole period of *Brahmacharyam* he is to be with the guru, or spiritual father. According to Manu, the period may extend to nine, eighteen or thirty-six years, though in these days, it is much less. During this period he is forbidden to use betel, to wear flowers

in his hair, or to ornament his body or fore-head with sandal. He must rise and bathe early, perform his *sandhyācandham* at the three *sandhyās* (sunrise, noon, and sunset), as taught to him during the Upanayanam ceremony, and offer oblation of fuel to the sacred fire (*samidādanam*.) He must abstain from perfumes, pungents, sensuality, wrath, covetousness, dancing, music, gambling, detractions of others, falsehood, impurity of all kinds, and must never injure any being. Till his *Samāvartanam*, or the ceremony of returning home after the course of his studentship, the Nambuthiri youth has to abstain from clothing of all kinds except a small strip of cotton cloth. While a twist of *muncha* grass is tied round the loins, these are renewed as often as is necessary during the prescribed period of *Brahmacharyam*. He must also wear a strap of leather (*Krishnājinam*) an inch in breadth across his shoulder, and hanging down in the same direction as the sacred thread; and the study of the Vedas forms the important part of the whole course.

Upanishédam :—When the above course is completed and at the return of the *Uttarāyanam* period, the rite called *Upanishédam* is performed on any day in the bright lunar fortnight when *Svādhyāham* comes in conjunction with any of the stars from *Kārttikai* to *Visākom*. The usual preliminaries being over, the Brahmachāri performs *hómam*, and at the end of it eats what remains of the *havissu* or *Nivediam*. The vow too is undertaken for the whole year.

Godanam :—At the close of the Upanishédam vow, the same auspicious day is chosen and after the initiatory ceremonies the Brahmachāri, having shaved and bathed performs *homam* and partakes of the remainder of the sacrificial rice. This is continued for twelve days.

Chukryam :—After *Gōḍana Vritam*, an auspicious day is chosen, as during the *Uttarāyanam* period, and wonted preliminaries having been performed, the Brahmachāri partakes of the remainder of the sacrificial rice. Before sunset that day, “the *avántara diksha*”, which is a part of this ceremony and is performed, when the Brahmachāri, whose eyes are blindfolded, goes through his evening service and fasts during the night. Next morning, he again goes through the daily service and performs the “*avántara diksha*” during which the bandage is removed from his eyes. He does not indulge in a bath for four days consecutively, but keeps himself free from pollution

in the meantime, and partakes once everyday of the sacrificial rice without salt. On the fourth day the rite called "*Avántara*" is performed and the *Brahmachari* is free to bathe.

Samávarthanam :—This is a ceremony by which the youth's studentship is brought to an end. For this an auspicious day is selected when the *Brahmachári* (the vedic student) bathes early before day-break, and goes through his early morning routine (*sandhiavandhanam*). He next performs *Nándimukha* and other preliminary ceremonies and prepares the sacrificial fire (*hóman*) which is fed with the twigs of *Ficus Religiosa*. After parting with the symbols of his *Brahmacharya*, namely, the string of grass (*mouchi*) round his loins and the waist band which he gives to the *Acharya* (priest) and another Brahman. Getting himself shaved, bathing inside the house in water on which the rays of the sun have not fallen that morning, he dresses and adorns himself in his best with his caste marks, and then brings the propitiation of the sacrificial fire to an end. He remains inside the house throughout the whole day for fear of exposing himself to the sun's rays, and performs the evening service at sunset. Next he gets out of the house and looks at the moon and stars, after which he is said to have passed the stage of *Brahmacharyam*.

This is often indulged in by the Nambuthiris, owing, partly to their desire to have a son to perform funeral and other ceremonies for the spirits of the departed, and partly to dispose of the superfluous number of girls. Two or three girls are married to one man to avoid the payment of heavy sums which are required to get suitable bridegrooms. When a Nambuthiri has several wives, the first wife has no precedence over the others, nor are 'the latter considered as a superior class of concubines like the hand-maids of the Jewish patriarchs'. They are all of equal status, and live amicably in the same house.

Polyandry and widow marriage are absolutely unknown among them.

The Nambuthiri women are kept in the strictest seclusion. Of all virtues, chastity is accounted the highest, and any violation of this, in man or woman, entails loss of caste, social status, and total separation

Polygamy.

Smarthavicharam.



NAMBUTHIRI ADULTS AFTER SAMAVARTHANAM (TERMINATION OF STUDENTSHIP).

from the family. Enquiries into cases of ~~caste~~ immorality are conducted by the *Smārthan* (judge), and hence the name "*Smārthāvichāram*", by which the caste trial is known. Should a woman of the caste misbehave herself, and the matter be known to the members of the family, they do not generally keep the secret to themselves, but the senior or some other male member thereof divulges it to the prominent members among the castemen of the neighbourhood. The latter on receiving the information, proceed to the family and make a careful enquiry into the truth of the matter. If they are satisfied as to her guilt, they direct the suspected woman to be lodged separately for they consider her to be impure. The husband or other member of the family then informs the ruler of the State, who thereupon, at the request of her husband or parents appoints a *Panchāyet* to conduct the *vichāram* (trial) and to issue summons (*Tittu*) to them. The *Panchāyet* consists of the *Smārthan* or president, two or more *Mimāmsakars* or Nambuthiris versed in caste-laws the *Agakōyma* or local head of the community, and the *Purakōyma* a representative of the Raja whose duty it is to stand with a drawn sword during the trial and to keep order. The office of the *Smārthan* is hereditary, and if the family to which he belongs becomes extinct, the *Yógam* or the village union nominates another in its place. The *Mimāmsakars* are appointed to help the *Smārthan*; the *Agakōyma* whose office is also hereditary, is appointed to preserve order while the *Purakōyma* is the ruler himself. In ancient times, the latter was invariably present. The *Smārthan* on the receipt of the royal mandate, receives from the girl's relations a small *Dakshina* (money gift), and generally proceeds to select the *Mimāmsakars*. In the State while there are several *Vaidikans* (caste priests), one of them accompanies a *Smārthan* to the place of *Vichārana* or enquiry, and the *Smārthan* merely conducts the enquiry as the representative of the *Vaidikans*, and is authorised and guided by them.

The proceedings commence with a *pūja* to the local deity after which the trial begins with the examination of the accused's *dāsi* or maid-servant who incriminates her. The woman remains all the time within the *Anjāmpura*; and the Sudra maid-servant stands at the door. All questions are addressed to her mistress through her; for the suspected woman must be honoured until the pronouncement of the final

verdict. It is curious to note this similarity to the English legal maxim that every man is innocent until he is proved guilty. The Smárthan makes a pretence of entering this flimsy edifice (*anjámpura*), as if ignorant of all that has transpired. The maid-servant steps out and informs him of the presence of her mistress inside; the Smárthan pretending to be astonished at this information, asks her why her mistress should not be in the main building. With this question, the enquiry may be said to have really begun. The next morning by 11 o'clock, the Smárthan and his colleagues again go and stand beside the out-house, and calling out the maid-servant again, begins the regular enquiry. About 5 o'clock in the evening, the Agakōyna relates the whole day's proceedings to the *Mimámsakars*, and takes their opinions as to the nature of the questions to be put on the following day, and this kind of enquiry lasts often for months and sometimes even for years. It is a very expensive undertaking, for the whole judicatory staff has to be maintained by the family, until the woman confesses her guilt. In the event of her confession, the woman is brought out and minutely cross-examined before all the members of the court, with a view to elicit the names of all the men who have had a share in her offence or who have taken part in her criminal intimacy. In the event of her refusing to do so, the trial is prolonged until she confesses. If the woman is found to be innocent of the charges, the judges perform *Kshama namaskāram*, (i. e. prostrations begging her pardon for the prosecution).

In former times various means of persuasion are said to have been used; such as the introduction of rats and snakes into the woman's room. After the completion of the enquiry, the guardian of the suspected woman presents himself before the assembled Brahmans and makes the customary obeisance. The Smárthan then recounts the details of the enquiry, and communicates the results thereof to the ruler of the State, who directs the suspected woman as well as the party composing the members of the enquiry to come before him. Again, on a particular day, a formal assembly is held comprising the members already mentioned, together with the ruler of the State. The Smárthan then narrates, in order, the various incidents connected with the enquiry, but delegates to a Brahman who stands outside on a stool, the task of

naming her paramours. As he mentions each name in stentorian tones, a pop-gun is discharged amidst the deafening beating of drums. After all the persons are enumerated, the woman is declared guilty of adultery. The *Pindiyans* or servants at once deprive her of the cloth covering the upper part of her body, and the umbrella with which she has been concealing her face. No longer is the woman a chaste woman (*kula-stri*): she is thenceforward called a *śādhanam* (thing). The Smārthan then advises her to lead the life of a religious recluse, doing penance and growing *tulsi* plants, in the hope that they may redeem her from her future birth. In the event of her willingness to do so, she is maintained at the expense of the State; otherwise she is at liberty to depart with whomsoever she pleases. After she has been handed over by the Smārthan to the custody of the Purakōyma, the guardian of the woman bathes and performs all the funeral ceremonies for her, who from that moment is counted as dead for all social and family purposes. In former times the outcaste Brahman women in the Chirakkal Taluk of North Malabar were handed over to a Tiyyan landlord, (*Mannandr*), of high rank and privileges; and he either had them as his wives, or sold them away when he did not like them. It then remains for her paramours to vindicate their character on pain of excommunication. Two courses are open to them to exculpate themselves either by undergoing the ordeal of boiling oil or of weighing; but these have been long ago abolished.

In the excommunication case of a Brahman woman which took place in the State a few years ago, about 65 men (Brahmans Ambalavasis, and Sūdras), were outcasted. Two leading men in the British territory who were also implicated in it, agreed to undergo the ordeal either of oil or of weighing to prove their innocence, and the Smārthan allowed it and gave them a formal writ called *pampu*. This, however, was considered by the whole community to be an irregular and unwarranted procedure, and was therefore declared null and void. The Smārthan and his colleagues were made to perform some *prāyaschittam* or expiatory ceremony which consisted of the recitation of the *Gāyatri mantrams* thousand times early morning after the usual bath for three years. At the end of three years he was to eat food boiled in *Panchagavyam*. He was to make gift of a hundred cows Rs. (2-8-0) and feed one hundred Brahmans.

The members of his house were also to perform a similar expiatory ceremony.

The seducers, who are placed under a ban, are considered dead in so far as their membership in the family is concerned, and funeral ceremonies are performed for them.

The husband must perform elaborate purificatory and expiatory rites (*práyaschittam*), concluding with a *Sudha-bhojanam*, or feast to celebrate his re-admission into caste, after he has obtained the ruler's permission. The matter does not end even here. The children of the woman by her husband after the commencement of the sinful act, the children of her associates as well as their chaste wives are degraded in caste ; and they become Chákkiyars and Nángiyars.

Even after the woman has soiled herself by her conduct, her parents advise her to confess her fault and to suffer the social penalty in this world in order to avoid the divine wrath in the next. The Smárthan takes up the case with a most unbiassed mind, respects the virtue of the woman, and interrogates her and obtains the answers through her maid-servant until the charge is proved. "No harsh word is employed, no shocking word ever suggested ; and the whole case is worked to a termination, by a series of mild questions which never fails to bring out the truth. The sinfulness of reading out the charge of adultery to one, who belonged to the purest of the community and who, in this instance, may perhaps be innocent, is avoided by the Brahman judge, and it is read out by a young Tamil Brahman."

The family property of a Nambuthiri is called *Brahma-*
Inheritance
swum, and every member thereof has an equal claim to it ; but practically it is the eldest son who succeeds to the property of his father, while the junior members are entitled to maintenance. This is in accordance with principle laid down in the two verses 106 and 107 of *Manu Smrithi* that a man's eldest son relieves him of all debt to the manes, and that he is therefore worthy of the whole estate. "As a father supports his sons, so the eldest look after the youngest when they behave towards him as sons, towards their father." This practice and the recognized principle among the Nambuthiris appear to be in consonance with the directions laid down by the law-giver.

It is on this ground that the eldest son alone marries,

while his brothers form conjugal relations with the women of the castes below them. In the latter case, the children of the union belong to the family of the mother, and are supported by the *káranavan* out of her family funds. If the eldest son is younger than any of his father's brothers, then the latter succeeds to the right of governing the family. If, on the other hand, an elder brother dies leaving an unmarried daughter behind him, the brother junior to him may take a lawful wife to continue the line. If the father dies before the son comes of age, and if there is no adult male to manage the affairs, then it is the eldest female of the house who succeeds to the right. Impartibility is the fundamental principle of the system. Among the *Ammomans*, inheritance is in the female line.

If the senior member of a Nambuthiri family has no legal heirs—neither his own sons, his brothers' sons, nor any near relation—he may adopt heirs in any one of the methods described below, but in the event of his having any heir in the male line, however distant, he is not entitled to exercise the right of adoption. In the latter case, the nearest and the oldest relative must be made to marry and thus preserve the family continuity. But, if there is no prospect of his brothers getting any issue, and if they should give their consent to the act, then he may adopt with their consent, that of the distant relatives not being required. If the person wishing to adopt, obtains the consent of his brothers, on the ground of the absence of the prospect of their having issue, and adopts one of the distant relatives, the consent of all other relatives, however distant, is necessary. If, under the above conditions, a Nambuthiri adopts a son and afterwards begets a son, the adopted son is entitled to a fifth of his property and the real son to four-fifths. This is allowed according to the common Hindu Law. If, however, necessary formalities, such as the *hómam*, etc., have been gone through, the latter forfeits his claim to the property.

There are three kinds of adoption now in vogue among the Kerala Brahmans. One of these is the *Pattukayyal Dethu*, that is, adoption in which ten hands or five persons, namely, (the parents who give away, the parents who receive and the boy given away) are concerned. If the boy to be adopted belongs to the same *gótra* and *sútra* as the adoptive family, then there is

no limit to the age at which he may be adopted. If he is of a different *gotra*, the adoption should take place before *Upanayanam*. The second form of adoption is the *Chanchamatha* or that in which a dry twig of *Ficus Religiosa*, nine inches long, forms a part. There is no limit to the age of the person to be adopted, and the only ceremony performed on such occasions is the offering of the twig to the God of Fire in the *homakundam* (sacrificial pit). The person thus adopted has to perform the funeral rites of the parent adopting him only and not those of their ancestors.

The third kind of adoption is known as *Kudivechu Illathu Dethu*, in which an only surviving widow or an old widower in a family adopts an heir. This is done by means of one of her relatives, and the family priest or *Vádhyar* who chooses a person from among the relatives, informs the ruler of the fact, and after getting him married, adopts him and his wife, as heirs to the widow or old man. The first two adoptions above referred to are made with a view to performing the funeral rites, while the third kind is resorted to in the absence of close relations; and the person so adopted performs the funeral obsequies of the old man or woman after death and succeeds to his property.

There is also another kind of adoption '*Kanniyodu Kudi Sarvaswadánam*' in which the parents having only a female child give her in marriage to a Brahman with all their property for her dowry and her son must perform for them the usual funeral rite. In fact, her son is treated as their own.

CHAPTER X.

THE BRAHMANS.

THE NAMBUTHIRIS.

(Continued).

It is the science which treats of heavenly bodies and their influence over human destiny. Ancient Jotisha Sastram or Hindu Astrology including Astronomy. Chaldeans, Egyptians and Zoroastrians appear to have cultivated this science in connection with their religious worship; and much of the Hindu Astrology must have been the common property of the early Aryans. For the Zodiacal signs are given the same names; the observation, names of planets, the connotations of their characters and attributes are all similar. The Hindus must have exchanged ideas with the neighbouring nations, and many non-Hindu astrologers such as Yavanáchárya are mentioned in Hindu works on astrology: foreign words such as (Greek) *heli*, *kriya*, *jetuma*, *parthonia*, *kéntram*, *hóra*, *drékúnam* and *kourpi* are also found in them.

Astrology including astronomy or *Jótisha sástram* is divided into three main divisions, namely, (1) *Siddhánta* or astronomy, which deals with mathematical portion, (2) *Phalita* or judicial astrology, in which predictions are based upon planetary movements, *prasnás* (the questions) for the clearing of doubts and the remedies suggested by it, being included in this division; and (3) *Muhúrtha* or the fixing of auspicious moments for all ceremonies, etc., with a view to lessen the evils and strengthen the benefits.

Mention is made of eighteen astrological works, of which *Súrya siddhánta*, named also as *Súryópanishad*, is the most important. *Jyótisha* is one of the six *ángas* (organs) of the *védas*, and to each *véda* a treatise under the title of *Jyótisha* is annexed; and this explains the adjustment of the Calendar for the purpose of fixing the proper periods for the performance of religious duties. It is adapted to the solar and lunar time.

with the civil year, and was evidently formed in the infancy of astrological knowledge. The religious life of the Brahmans was one continuous routine of the performance of the ceremonies enjoined by the vedas, (*Shódasa kriyas*) sixteen sacraments, *Yagnas* or sacrifices, *Tharpanàs* or oblations of *sesamum* and water to the manes of the departed, the *Upakarmas*, for which much care and thought were exercised in choosing proper time and seasons; and the spiritual welfare of the community chiefly depended on the proper performance of them, during auspicious moments. *Sradhas* had to be performed in accordance with the rules laid down in this, as otherwise injurious results might result from the selection of inauspicious times. Apart from these religious ceremonies, all speculations in trade, constructions of edifices, etc., depended upon the auspicious times for their commencement. It is said that the military operations of the Pandavas were begun at an auspicious time fixed by the astrologer Sahadeva, one of the Pandavas well versed in the science.

Such auspicious occasions depended upon the movements and position of the planets, such as conjunctions, oppositions, triunes, quadratures, exaltations, etc. The religious ceremonies had to be performed at the two equinoxes and solstices, and the time for them could be determined only by a close observation of the planets and their movements. Great credit is due to the ancients for the advancement of this science under adverse circumstances chiefly owing to the absence of observatories and appliances which modern astronomers possess, though mention is made of some *yantrams* or apparatus in their works.

The real position of the planets in the Zodiac are of importance in connection with the selection of *muhúrthams* (auspicious moments), and in judicial astrology the apparent position of the planets has to be taken into account, and a correction is therefore applied to the mean positions called *Bijábalams*.

The astronomical portion was first developed by correct observations and exact mathematical calculations. The ancients recognised only seven heavenly bodies as of any practical value in the process, together with the two nodes of the moon. They are the Sun, the Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu, the ascending node, and Kéthu, the descending

node, and these are called the *Navagraha* or nine planets. The nodes are also elevated to the rank of planets, although they are devoid of any corporeal existence. In order to fix the relative position of the planets they felt the necessity of a meridian in reference to which all reckonings had to be made. The town of Lanka, according to Puranic accounts and traditions, was the seat of an observatory, and was therefore selected as the starting point owing to its situation at the Equator. The city which is now submerged, was in the days of its glory, the capital of a large empire, and is on the same meridian with Dhandakaranya Ujain and Kurukshetra. What Greenwich is to the modern astronomers, Lanka and Ujain were to ancient astronomers, who were credited with a profound knowledge of Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry, both plain and spherical. The results of ancient calculations, when tested by modern methods, do not appear to differ materially, and the calculations of one astronomer were verified and corrected by others. Thus all sources of error, as far as human genius, unaided by mechanical means, could do, were eliminated. About the sixth or seventh century a great astronomer Arya Bhatta, not satisfied with the results and methods in the eminent work already referred to, wrote a similar work called *Arya Siddhanta*, and the two works are now recognized as authorities on the subject.

For purposes of calculations, the Zodiac is divided into twelve equal parts called *Rasis* or signs, each of which is again divided into thirty *Bhagas* or degrees. One degree is equal to 60 minutes and one minute to 60 seconds, each of which again is divided in sixty parts. Ancient astronomers made allowance for the precession of the Equinoxes, and variations in latitude and longitude, and correctly ascertained the reclinations and right ascensions. They were also acquainted with the direct and retro-grade movements of the planets, and obliquity of the eclipses. Nothing that could be observed had escaped their notice, and they were able to note the apparent and real position of the planets at any given movement and for any given place. They gave correct forecastes of solar and lunar eclipses, their commencement, duration and other particulars.

The second division of Hindu astrology was clearly an after-growth, for there is no distinct mention of this science in the *Ādās*. Though astrology is regarded as a *Vedāṅga*, yet it is

open to doubt whether the application of the word was comprehensive enough to include judicial astrology. When astronomy had made fair progress among the ancient Hindus, the calculations and results thereof were used to foretell events relating to the career of men. Like other contemporary nations the ancient Hindus clearly comprehended the inter-dependence of the various planets of the solar system and the natural influence they shed upon one another for good or for evil. For instance, the moon affects the earth vitally, and regulates the tides of the oceans. The sun which is the source of all life and energy affects the motion of the earth. If these distant bodies could affect the earth in mass, they could as well affect the living being on it. Concerning this Mr. Suryanarayana Row says, "Man is the result of previous forces working under definite laws, with local modifications as are found to be necessary in each individual case. His physical constitution is under the direct influence of the sun, because the seed that produces him, the bed in which he is nourished, the food with which he is fed, the clothing he wears, the water he drinks, and the air he breathes, are the result of the sun's rays working in Nature in their own inscrutable ways. His brain cells and his nervous system are greatly affected by the time, place, ~~seed~~, food, climate and other conditions of his life; and his ~~intellect~~ is entirely dependent on the quantity and quality of the brain cells derived from those sources. Vision would be worse than useless if there had been no light, and so also his other senses each of which has been made to work under the direct influence of a particular planet. All the planets shine by light borrowed from the sun, and while retaining some of their power, they add something of their own and thus influence mankind in various ways."

"As the rain drops are affected by the nature of the soil they fall upon, and are influenced by its properties, so also the planets, though shining by borrowed lights, shed influence peculiar to their own. The moon exercises great influence over us, and affects our minds considerably. Lunatics, ~~idiots~~, and mad men exhibit marked changes on full-moon and new-moon days. Sick people always pass restless nights before new-moon days, and they are seriously ill; every one despairs of their life, until they pass the new-moon days. Electricity has been declared to be the great physical agent, which pervades

through the whole universe, and is the cause of the production of the strangest phenomena. The intellect of man, is nothing but a result of the nervous currents which pass through the human frame, and which, when largely concentrated, form what is called the mind or will-power. Whatever will might be, it cannot remain any length of time unaffected by its surroundings, and the food and the climate are important factors in the determination of our mind or will force. Will is therefore under the direct influence of the sun's light and heat, and might have been called into existence by their combined chemical action. The greater the influence of the sun, the greater is the nervous energy or will force in man".

The Sun, shining with his millions and billions of rays, affects our bodies, our minds, and our prospects in life. He makes man courageous or timid, as he sheds a greater or less influence on the person in question. In entering the human body, the solar rays are not uniform in their effects. In some organs they produce health, while in others, they produce disease. The chemical effects of the refracted solar rays are different in different parts, and the minutest surface exposed to the solar rays has as much power of refraction as the huge sky when we witness the appearance of the rain-bow. Herein lies the secret of planetary influences. They fall on the bodies, they affect their colour, they change their constitution, producing health or disease, and make them pursue a certain path which may or may not be to their advantage. All the influences above explained come directly from the sun, and we are entirely subject to them. In fact, we could not have taken our present existence, if it had not been for his universal influence.

A course of observations and reasoning, supplemented by the faith in reincarnation, led astrologers to the inevitable conclusion, that the planetary positions in the Zodiac at the time of birth of each human being indicated the nature of his or her career.

Starting from this hypothesis the elaborate science of *Phalabhāga* or judicial astrology was constructed, and the lordship of the signs of the Zodiac was assigned to the planets according to the following scheme. The Sun had the sign of Leo for his house, the Moon had Cancer, Mars Aries, and Scorpeo, Mercury Gemini and Virgo; Jupiter Sagittari, Pisces; and

Saturn ruled over Capricorn and Aquarius. The deities presiding over these planets had their ranks determined for them. The sun and the moon were the overlords or kings. Mercury next in rank was the heir apparent. Venus below mercury was in charge of the temporal affairs of the solar system. Mars graded below Venus, was entrusted with the command of the army. Then came the spiritual adviser Jupiter and lastly the menial servant Saturn. Planets again are divided into two classes according to the character of the influence they exercise—the benefics and malefics. Waxing moon, Venus and Jupiter are benefics, while the waning Moon, Sun, Mars and Saturn are malefics.

The position and aspects of the benefics are believed to do good to the subject, while the reverse is the case in regard to malefics. The Zodiac is further divided into twelve parts for purposes of judicial astrology, and these divisions unlike the signs are of variable dimensions. The rising sign at the birth of a person or a part thereof is the *Lagna* or the first division of the horoscope. This is the first house, and all about the physical constitution of the individual is determined by the examination of the house and its occupants. The second house treats of the family and maternal side, wealth, dependants, eyes, and face. The third house is examined to learn about the brothers, energy, etc. The fourth house deals with the physical and mental happiness of the person, vehicles, dwellings, mother, etc. Predictions about the offspring, results of past *Karmas*, education, etc., are made after the examination of the fifth house. The sixth house treats of the enemies, diseases, and debts. The seventh deals with marriage and conjugal felicity or otherwise. Death, defeat, sickness and affliction are associated with the eighth house, and all deductions concerning the spiritual life of the person are made from the ninth house. The tenth house treats of the respectability, character of the occupation, influence of the man, in short, all his worldly greatness. The eleventh house deals with acquisitions of all kinds, and the twelfth, losses of all kinds. Thus, the horoscope of the man deals in this manner with all phases of human life according as these houses and their lords are powerful or otherwise, well or ill combined, well or ill aspected.

Different rules are given for determining the potency of the planets at various times. After giving a general account

of the horoscope in this manner, the astrologer proceeds to ascertain the order and duration in which each planet governs the life of an individual. Different systems are explained in the treatises current, the prevalent method being the system called the *Nakshātradesa*. According to this scheme, the Sun's period is six years, the Moon's ten years, Rahu's eighteen years, Jupiter's sixteen years, Saturn's nineteen years, Mercury's seventeen years, Kétu's seven years, and last of all Venus, twenty years. The maximum duration of a man's life is calculated to be one hundred and twenty years. The *dasa* of the same planet does not start the cycle of all the persons. A person born in the asterism of *Āswathī* begins his career under the influence of Kétu. Another born in the asterism of Bharani has the *dasa* of Venus at birth. When the first *dasa* and the period are settled, the above order of *dasas* and their respective periods follow in regular succession. By the examination of these *dasas* the character of a man's career in particular periods of his life is known. Another branch of judicial astrology is called *Prasnam*. Here the astrologer is consulted in reference to some particular matter, such as the health of a person, theft, remedy for demoniacal attacks, a contemplated enterprise or a projected journey, and his decision is called for. He does not consult the horoscope of the querent, but a Zodiacal diagram is drawn with all the planets in their respective positions at the time in question. From the *Rāsichakram* not of the person, but of the moment in consultation, the question is answered. This then is a brief sketch of astrology as practised by the Hindus.

Thus from time immemorial astrology was in high favour with the Brahmans, and in the commentaries of Bhattolpala on *Brihat Jātaka*, it is said that the Brahmans alone could learn astrology and practise it as an art. Owing to its being a *Védanga*, members of other castes were not allowed to learn and practise so sacred a science.

The Nambuthiris in Malabar had in former times paid unusual attention to the study of this sacred and interesting subject of Astronomy, including astrology, and have compiled the following most authoritative works on the subjects:—(I) *Desadhyāyi* is an important and elaborate commentary on the first ten chapters of Varāha Mahira's *Hora sastra* by Thakkalathur

Bhattathiri.¹ (II) Kelallur Neelakanda Chomáthiri (Somayaji, one who has performed the Soma sacrifice), has written the following works :—

(1) *Arya Bhattiya Bhashiya*—a commentary on Arya Bhatta.

(2) *Tantra Samgraha*—a treatise on computation.

(3) *The Grahana Nirnaya*—a work dealing with the determination of eclipses.

III. Pudumana Chomathiri has written a work on the *Mánasa Ganitha* or mental calculation.

IV. Mazhamangalathu Nambuthiri has compiled a very important work called *Káladipika*, or lamp of times. There are besides many minor works, text books on *Muhúrthas*, (divisions of time), *Prasna* (astrological enquiry), *Játhaka* (horoscope) and *Ganitha* (calculations).

Thalakalathur Bhattathiri became an outcaste by an accident. He rendered into Malayalam many of the Sanskrit works above referred to for the use of low caste Hindus.

From this it would appear that Brahmans' domestic life is closely connected with the rules of astrology, and no action, calculated to bring in a good result, is commenced without consulting its dictates.

Gargi says that a king without a competent court astrologer is like a man without manhood, and that the village or town which does not contain a good astrologer should not be inhabited by sensible men. At present there are very few among the Nambuthiris, who are good astrologers, but there are many among the Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis, Sudras, Izhuvans and Kaniyans. There is not a single village which does not contain at least one astrologer. Thus, an astrologer is an indispensable factor in the family and social organization of the Hindus in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore.²

For the performance of the following important ceremonies the auspicious days are selected as given below :—

Marriage Ceremonies (viváham)—(a) Auspicious times :—

(1). Lunar Months; Káarthika (November-December), Margasira (December-January), Magha (January-February), Phalguna (March-April), Vaisákha (April-May).

1. Vide pages 186-188, Cochin Tribes and Castes, Vol. I.

2. Vide Kaniyans, Chapter XI, pages 188-208, Cochin Tribes and Castes, Vol. I.

(2). Days of asterism :—Moolam, Anorádha, Mrigasirsha, Rohini, Hasta, Mágha, Oothra, Oottaráshada, Oottarabhadra.

(b) Inauspicious times :—The last five days of a month (*Riktathithies*), Shasti, Ashtami, Vyathipatha, Vydruthi. The seventh house from the marriage Lagna should be without planets. Venus must not be in the sixth house and Mars should be avoided in the eighth house.

Nishékam or Nuptials :—(a) Auspicious times—(1) Sravana, Róhini, Hasta, Anorádha, Swáti, Raivati, Moola, Oottara, Oottarashada, Oottarabhadra, Sathabhisha.

2. The Rasis; Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Aquarius, Pisces, Sagitarius.

(b) Inauspicious days :—The fourth, sixth, eighth, thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of a lunar month; Sunday, Tuesday, and Saturday.

Pregnancy Ceremony :—(a) Auspicious days; Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday.

The first, second, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, tenth, eleventh; thirteenth day after full or new moon, Asterisms Pushya and Sravana and all the Lagnás (signs of the Zodiac) with the exception of Mithuna.

Simanthonayana :—Auspicious times : (1) The first, second, third, fifth, seventh, tenth, eleventh and thirteenth day after full or new moon.

(2) Asterisms :—Róhini, Pushya, Hasta, Punarvasu, Uttara, Uttarashada, Sravana, Révati, Mrigasirsha and all Lagnás with the exception of Leo and Scorpeo.

Námakarna : (Naming ceremony) Auspicious times :—Days of asterisms, viz., Anorádha, Punarvasu, Oottaráshada, Oottarabhadra, Satha-Bhisha, Swáti, Dhanishta, Sravana, Rohini, Aswini, Mrigasirsha, Revathi, Hasta, Pushyami, in fixed signs, when the eighth house is clean and without a planet on Friday, Wednesday, Thursday, Monday or Tuesday.

Annaprásana (giving rice to the child for the first time) : The days of asterism Punarvasu, Mrigasirsha, Dhanishta, Pushyami, Hasta, Swáti, Aswini, Anorádha, Sravana, Sathabhisha, Oottara, Oottaráshada, Oottarabhadra, Chaitra.

All the lunar days except the fourth, sixth, eighth, ninth, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth are good. The

tenth house from the *Lagna* (the feeding sign) should be without any planet.

Vidhyárambham (Commencement of education):—Auspicious days: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

The days of asterisms: Aswini, Punarvasu, Hastam, Chittira, Swāti, Anorádha, Jaista, Révati, Sravana.

Lunar days:—First, second, third, fourth, fifth, seventh, tenth, eleventh, twelfth and the thirteenth day. The eighth house from the *Lagna* should be clean without a planet.

Upanayanam: (Investiture of holy thread):—Auspicious times: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday.

Days of Asterisms:—Aswini, Rohini, Mrigasirsha, Punarvasu, Swāti, Anorádha, Oottarashada, Sravana, Dhanishta, Pushyami, Révati.

The signs:—Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Virgo, Libra and Pisces.

Planets in the eighth house should be scrupulously avoided with the sun and Mars in the twelfth house and malefics and in kendras. This important ceremony should be always done before noon.

An Illustrative Horoscope.—The following diagram is the horoscope of a man who was born on the 25th November 1862 A. D. which corresponds to the 12th of the Solar month *Scorpeo* at about 45-50 *ghatikas* after sunrise. The combinations of the planets at the time of birth are thus located.

..	Rahu	Saturn	Mer- cury	Ketu
..	Rasee		..	Jupiter	Navamsa		Moon Saturn
Moon Jupiter			birth	..			Mars
Mars	Sun Venus	Mer- cury Ketu	..	Rahu	..	Birth sun	Venus

At the time of birth the constellation *Sravana* ruled with a balance of the major period of moon for ten months and eighteen days. The position of the moon and jupiter has to be noticed; the former occupies his own *Navámsa* and the latter is in *Kumbham*. The combination of the moon with

Jupiter produces what is called *Késari yóga*. He rises to a high position by industry, intelligence and devotion to his work.

The position of Mars and Saturn in the fifth house from birth (Lagna) and Chandra (moon) respectively, gives rise to the loss of many children.

Venus (Sukra) is between two malefics Mars (Kujan) and Kétu and that of the debilitated Navamsa and this position predicts the loss of his first wife and the marriage of a second one. The position of Venus in the Navamsa should also be noticed. The constellation of *Sravana* makes him rich, learned and famous. Ravi or sun in scorpio makes him adventurous reckless and cruel. Kujan (Mars) in *Sagattari* makes him a minister to a king or chief and fearless.

Ravi (sun) in the fourth house from Lagna (birth), and moon in the sixth predict his success in life and intelligence. Kujan (Mars in the fifth house foretells the possession of a few children. Budhan (Mercury) in the third house makes him cruel and Jupiter in the sixth witty and humourous. Sukra (Venus) in the fourth and Manna in the tenth house, prognosticate popularity, learning, magistracy, pilgrimage to the Ganges and other holy waters. Ráhu in the ninth and Kétu in the third, predict the possession of a few children, adventure, popularity and wealth.

Thus for every child at birth, the time is noted to ascertain the positions of planets, and horoscopes are cast by the local astrologers for a small remuneration.

Mantrams are, strictly speaking, divinely inspired vedic texts, and are generally used as prayers or invocations to deities with definite meanings and applications attached to words, which, if properly uttered and repeated according to certain rules of phonetics, cannot fail to produce the expected results. They are supposed to possess in themselves mystic powers capable of producing every conceivable good to oneself or evil to one's enemies.

It has been said that the Brahmans have to study the *Védas* and practise religious and other rites ordained by the *Srutis* and *Grihya Sutrás*; and a proper performance of them with the recital of the vedic texts or *mantrams* which are only prayers addressed to certain deities, is calculated to bring benefits to the performer and his family, while his indifference

or negligence tends to their ruin. Besides the deities mentioned above, there are others of an intermediate class presiding over multifarious maladies, and others again, known as demons, spirits, mischievous imps and fiends which are ever inclined to do harm to mankind, and should therefore be propitiated with meditations (*japams*), *homam* (incantation), *tharpanam* and food to Brahmans which are supposed to compel them to obey the commands of the exorciser. In ancient times Kerala was believed to have been full of these elementals, and tradition refers to Parasurama as having, for the protection of the people, imparted the mysteries of magic or *mantravādam* to the members of two old Nambuthiri families, Kallur and Kattumadam. The former are versed in *Sanmantrams* to be used for good purposes, while the latter are learned in *Durmantrams*—evil mantrams or black art to be used for evil purposes. The members of these families still practise magic as ordained by the great Brahman Warrior.

Only Brahmans are allowed to study and practise the magic of the higher order though professional magicians abound in all castes. Such persons are in constant demand in Hindu families. For, every malady or distress which cannot be rightly diagnosed, is attributed to some one of these supernatural agencies, probably a spirit of the departed male or female, hovering about the house or village and having possessed the patient. The nature of the malady and the particular spirit afflicting the patient is divined by the astrologer, and the magician is invited to exorcise him.

The deities to be propitiated are of two classes, the *Sanmurthis* or benevolent deities who are capable of doing good, and *Durmurthis* or malevolent ones who are ever inclined to do harm. To the former belong Vigneswara, Subramania, Anjanéya, Narasimha and Bhagavati; and to the latter, Kuttichathan, the spirit of the departed, Prethas and other mischievous imps. Each deity has to be invoked by a special *mantram* which to be effective has to be repeated a number of times, generally 1,00,000, and the magician acquires the necessary powers of success in his art.

The best known popular works dealing with the subject are (1) *Prapanchasaram*, (2) *Prayógasaram*, (3) *Sáradatilakam*, (4) *Mantrasaram*, (5) *Yantrasaram* and (6) *Batikalpam*. The professional magicians are not learned in these works,

but they obtain their knowledge or training in the subject from a *Guru* or preceptor or by transmission from a long line of ancestors by a strict observance of the ceremonials with implicit faith in their efficacy coupled with the advice already referred to.

Mantrams have always to be repeated after proper understanding, and their significance is of so much importance as the magical force and sound. Every *mantram* appeals to a deity or *dēvatā* and is connected with a *Rishi*. The proper recitation of it depends upon a certain rule of metre *chandas*. Their efficacy is greatly enhanced when used on auspicious days, at particular times and seasons. They should be repeated in the month of Chaitra for valour, in Vaisākha for jewels, in Māgha for intelligence, on Sundays for wealth, on Mondays for tranquility, on Tuesdays for long life. All intercalary months should be avoided. By the aid of mantrams even Gods can be brought under control.

Mantrams are divided into four classes:—(1) *Mantrasāra* or the essence of magic includes all mantrams with their efficacy for good or evil, and the method of learning or reciting them with the aid of the *Guru* (preceptor). *Mantrams* are combinations of the five initial letters of the five sacred elements which produce sounds, but not words. These are believed to vibrate on the ether, and act on latent forces which are there. (2) *Yantrasāra* includes all cabalistic figures, and the method of drawing and using them, and objects to be attained by them. They are drawn on thin plates of gold, silver, copper or lead. The efficacy of the figures, when drawn on gold, will, it is said, last for a century, while those drawn on the less precious metals will be effective only for six months or a year. Leaden plates are made use of when the *mantrams* have to be buried underground. These figures should possess the symbols of life, eyes, tongue, the eight cardinal points of the compass, and the five elements.

Prayogasāra includes attraction or summoning by enchantment, driving out evil spirits, *Ochatanam* (exorcism), *Stambanam* (stupefaction), *Vasiam* (tempting or bringing a deity or evil spirits under control), *mōhanam* (enticement as for love), (*māranam* destruction) and *Vidveshanam* (separation of friends.) The *mantrams* are effective only when the individual who resorts to them is pure in mind and body.

This can be attained by the recital of *Agapagayathri* (216, exhalations and inhalations) in twenty-four hours.

In this connection, *Bijas* are the mystical letters or the syllables invented for the sake of brevity to denote their root (*Múla*) or the essential part of such *mantras* or the name of the deity to whom it may be addressed or some part of the body over which that deity presides. For example, *Am* is said to denote Siva, *U* Vishnu, *Hrim* the Sun, *Lam* the earth, *Nam* the mind, *Dham* the tongue, and the Goddess Bhuvaneshwari, *Nam* both the Goddess Annapurna, *Gum* (Guru) and the nose and palm and the ear, etc.

These have to be divided among the deities Ganésa, Bramha, Vishnu, Rudra, Jivathma, Paramathma, and the Guru, in the proportion of 600, 6,000, 6,000, 6,000, 1,000, 1,000, 1,000. A man can become learned in *mantrams* by the regular performance of the recognised ceremonial, by learning them from a *Guru*, by proper recital of them, burning the sacred fire (*Homams*) and giving food to Brahmans and *Tharpanam* (oblations of water) to deities, *beli* (sacrifice).

Tantrasara or the science of symbolical acts with or without words:—1. For a yantram to be efficacious the following method is recommended. As examples of yantrams the following may be cited. In a room specially selected for the purpose, the Yantram connected with the deity is drawn on the floor; in the centre of which is placed a clean bell-metal lamp which is lighted. Sixteen kinds of *pujas* are performed for the deity who is supposed to dwell in the lamp. Close to this is also placed a gold leaf three inches square, and on this is inscribed the diagram with the mystic letters. After necessary *pujas* for a number of days during which the deity is believed to reside in it, the gold leaf rolled and preserved in a small metallic cylinder may be worn round the neck or the loin by tying it to a piece of thread. A man or woman under a demoniacal attack may be made to sit by the side of the lamp, when the exorciser by his *japam* (meditation) or incantation drives out the devil. This is then followed by an invocation of the goddess to quit the lamp.

12. There are various methods of neutralising the effect of mantrams used by another magician or *mantravadi* for the destruction or humiliation of others. The difficulty is to find out the exact *mantra* which is employed for one injury; and

having selected the proper one, every such *yantram* is rendered powerless by uttering it with one's face, bending over a vessel full of milk and then swallowing the milk after inscribing the *Yantram* on the leaf of a banyan tree and throwing it into a river. The following are some of the very important yantrams which are used by magicians (*mantravadies*.)

1. Yantrams—Ganapathy Yantram. This should be drawn on a gold leaf, and Ganapathy, the presiding deity, propitiated. It is then enclosed in a metal cylinder and tied round the neck of a female or the loin of a man by means of a thread. It will cure diseases, conquer enemies, or entice any one. If the sacred fire is kept up while the formula is repeated, and dry cocoanut, plantain fruits, money, ghee, parched rice and sweet bread put into the fire; the performer will be blessed with wealth and prosperity.

2. Bhadrakāli Yantram:—The figure is drawn on the floor with flour of rice, turmeric, charcoal powder, and leaves of the castor oil plant, and if *puja* as mentioned above is done at night to the deity, it will lead to the acquisition of knowledge, strength, freedom from disease, and impending calamities, wealth and prosperity. If the *puja* is celebrated by a Mantravadi for 12 days with his face turned towards the south, it will produce the death of an enemy.

3. The utterances of a certain mantram and recital of *Purushasuktham* (a vedic hymn), before 11 A. M., and the distribution of milk among children will produce increase of children, wealth, cows and prosperity. If butter is taken by barren women, with the recital of this *mantram*, they will be blessed with children.

4. Sudarsana yantram, when drawn on a metal sheet, and enclosed in a cylinder worn round the neck or on the arm, will relieve those who are ill or possessed of devils. For driving out devils an oblation to Agni must be offered, while the mantram "On nama Suhasrahun pul" is uttered. If the Sudarsana yantram is drawn on butter spread on a plantain leaf, *puja* performed, and the butter given to a barren woman, there will be no danger to herself or future issue.

5. Sarabha yantram will cure men from epilepsy or intermittent fever, while Subramania yantram drawn and regularly

worshipped will expel devils from both those attacked by them, and from houses.

6. Hanuman yantram when worn will protect those who are out on dark nights, and produce bodily strength and wisdom. If drawn on a gold leaf, enclosed in a casket, and *puja* performed to it every Saturday, it will bring prosperity and help pregnant women during their confinement.

7. *Suthaka dohosham* yantram.—Children under one year of age are supposed to be affected, if they are seen by a woman on the fourth day of menstruation with wet clothes and empty stomach after bathing. She may not ever see her own baby or husband till she has changed her clothes and taken food. To avert the evil a waist band, made of the bark of arka plant (*calotropis gigantia*), is worn.

8. Pakshi yantram.—If drawn on a sheet of lead, and kept in several places round a house, will keep snakes away.

9. Moolatrigona yantram if drawn on the floor and a knife placed on it will drive out devils, from those attacked thereby.

10. Vatuga Bhirava yantram cures disease in those who are under eighteen years of age, and drives out all kinds of evil spirits. If ashes are smeared on the face, and the *mantram* uttered sixteen times, it will be very effective.

11. Varāti yantram is very useful to any one who wishes to kill an enemy. He should sit in a retired spot at night, with his face turned towards the south, and repeat the *mantram* a thousand times for twenty days.

12. Prathingiri yantram is drawn on a sheet of lead and buried at a spot over which a person, whose death is desired will come to pass. It is then placed on the floor on which the sacred fire is kindled. The *mantram* should be repeated eight hundred times for seven nights.

13. Cāhmundi and Raktha Chāmundi yantrams are used for causing the death of enemies. The *mantram* should be written on a sheet of lead and *puja* performed, with the sacrifice of toddy and mutton.

14. To produce an ulcer which will cause the death of an enemy in ninety days, a *mantram* is written on a piece of cadjan (palm leaf) enclosed in an egg with a small quantity of earth on which he has urinated and buried in an ant-hill. A fowl is also killed and its blood and some toddy are poured over the egg. To cure fever, the formula is written with the

finger in water contained in a basin and the appropriate words repeated while the water is being drunk.

15. A charm called the Aswárúda yantram enables a person wearing it to cover long distances on horseback; and he can make the most refractory horse amenable by tying it round its neck.

Sakti is worshipped in various manifestations in the form of Goddesses and a special yantram is made in the worship of each of them. The ordinary yantram is one which is sometimes placed in the centre of a lotus diagram; and the Bijaksharas belonging to the Goddess are inscribed a certain number of times on each petal.

The Sri chakra or holy circle is described in a diagram of the kind, and is then worshipped. It is supposed to represent the orb of the earth, nine triangles being drawn within the circle to denote the nine continents. In the centre is the drawing of the mouth, which is believed to typify the female energy *Sakti* presiding over the circle. According to some authorities even the orthodox Sankara Acharya must have been a Sakti worshipper. He is known to have placed representation of it in each of the four monasteries founded by him.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BRAHMANS.

THE NAMBUTHIRIS.

(Continued).

Nambuthiris are the true védic Brahmans, and are non-sectarian in religion. Their religion may be described as being bound up in the bundle of their every day experience. More than in any other sect of the Brahmans, religion is their constant companion ; and every incident, every circumstance, and every operation in their *illams* (houses) is subject to the most minute religious canons. An idea of them can be gathered from the daily religious routine of an orthodox Nambuthiri.

An orthodox Nambuthiri must rise from his bed before sunrise, *i. e.*, before half past four and six o'clock to begin his 'diurnal course of ceremonial observances', his first important act being to answer the calls of nature, and then to clean his teeth for both of which elaborate rules have been laid down, and any violation of them will lead to the forfeiture of the whole merit of the day's religious acts.¹ He ought properly to clean his teeth with a leaf or two of a mango tree. All *Brahmachàris* (vedic students), widows, and those under a vow must use only these for cleaning their teeth, but married men (*Grihastas*) may, for this purpose, resort to rice-bran burned and reduced to charcoal. It must be noted, in this connection, that while the twigs of the sacred fig tree (*vata*), of the thorny plant Baval (babul), and the nimba or the Nim are recommended for Brahmans in general, the Nambuthiri is ordained to use the mango leaf abundantly found in his own garden. Married men are forbidden to clean their teeth on *Ekâdesi* (eleventh day after full or new moon), *Sankrantis* (first days of the month), *Sradha* days, *Pûrvana days*, and on Sundays, when they have to rinse their mouths twelve times.

The next important religious act of the day is bathing (*snâna*) which should be done in some sacred stream,* but in

1. Sankara Smriti, Chap. IV, verses 1-42.

the absence of a river, he may bathe in a tank in his own compound. He should wash his dress and then his feet three times with and without a handful of earth. He should next perform *āchamana* (sipping water), and then plunge in water three times, and again perform the *āchamana*. This sipping of water is a requisite introduction of all rites; without which says the *Sāmba Purāna*, all acts of religion are in vain. All persons remove the water by rubbing the head first with a towel, but a *Grihastha* should rub the back of the body first, a *Brahmachari* may begin with any part of the body. A *snātaka* (one fit to marry), a *Sanyasi*, an *Agnihōtri*, a *Dikshitan* (one that has performed a *Yāgam* or sacrifice) must begin to rub first the ears, eyes, heart, throat, respectively, and dip the wet cloth in water before rubbing the other parts of the body. The tuft of hair on the head (*sikha bandham*) must be tied either before or after covering exposure with a strip of cloth. Here again it must be noted that while other classes of Brahmans have their plunge bath in water with a loin cloth and another piece of cloth for rubbing, the Nambuthiri has his bath without any loin dress, but with only an under-cloth (*kaupinam*). While the former dresses himself in the orthodox fashion, the latter is either completely nude or has his *komanam* (a strip of cloth to cover exposure). There are four kinds of bath prevailing among the Brahmans, in general, namely, (1) *Brahmam* (sprinkling of water on the body with the recital of mantrams), (2) *Vāyāvyam* (rubbing the body with earth), (3) *Agnēyam* (rubbing the body with holy ashes), and (4) *Vārunam* (plunge bath). The last only is sanctioned in Kerala by Parasurama.¹ If a Nambuthiri is ill and cannot bathe to become pure to perform a ceremony, the bathing can be done only by proxy. If another Nambuthiri bathes seven times after touching him each time, the latter becomes as pure as if he himself has bathed.

The pious Nambuthiri completes all the preliminary acts and purifications above described, and proceeds to the regular morning service called (*Prātha Sandhya*), performed at the junction of day and night. This varies according to the particular branch of the vedas to which the Nambuthiri belongs and also according to the immemorial traditions and customs of his family. There is, however, no excuse for the omission of it, however much it may differ in detail. The first and usual act

preliminary to all Hindu religious rites, is *achamanam* (sipping water), three mouthfuls being taken in for internal ablution with no such recital of the names of Achuta, Anantha and Govinda, as is prevailing among the other classes of Brahmins. The water is taken up in the hollow palm of the right hand or poured into the palm from a spoon, and is supposed to cleanse body and soul in its downward course. This is done three times at the commencement of the morning Sandhya.

Then the next division of the ceremonial is called *Mārjana* (sprinkling). It is a kind of self baptism performed by the worshipper himself by sprinkling water on the head, while the three first verses of the Rig Veda, Chap. x. 9, are recited. It may thus be translated:—

“O! Ye Apas (waters), All pervading divine currents, since you are the source of pleasure, help us therefore by giving us energy so that we may feel the mighty sound.”

“That essence of yours which is most auspicious, give us a share of that here. Like loving mothers pour on us your blessing. O! Waters, we approach you for all our sins to be destroyed, give us strength to cope with sin.”¹

Then follows a second performance of *Mārjana* (sprinkling), and a repetition of all the nine verses of the Rig Veda, of which the first three verses had been previously recited.

All the ceremonials up to this point are supposed to precede the actual appearance of the sun above the horizon. The worshipper now prepares to render homage to the rising luminary by what is called *Arghya-dhāna*, for which the worshipper should stand towards the east, recite the *Gāyitri mantrams*, offer water or throw it into the air from the two open hands hollowed and joined together with the sacred thread (*Yagnó-pavita*) put round the two thumbs. *Gāyitri* is invoked in these words “Thou art light, thou art seed; thou art immortal life, thou art called effulgent, beloved by the gods, defamed by none, thou art the holiest of sacrifices.”

After this he offers water in the same manner to the *Dévas*, to the *Rishis* (sages) and to the *Pitris*. This is the *Tarpana* ceremony which is a triple act which consists in the offerings of water for refreshment to the gods, sages and fathers. It is divided into three parts; in the first part *Déva*

1. The Daily Practice of the Hindus by Srisa Chandra Vasu. page 85

Tarpana 'refreshing of the gods,' the sacred thread is worn over the left shoulder and under the right arm, the worshipper being then called *Upaviti*. Water is taken up in the right hand and poured out over the straightened fingers. In the second part of the *Tarpana* service called *Rishi-tarpana*, the sacred thread is worn round the neck like a necklace, the worshipper being then called *Niviti*. The water is then offered so as to flow over the palm between the root of the thumb and fore-finger, the finger being bent inwards. The worshipper now changes the position of his sacred thread, and placing it over the right shoulder and under the left arm (being then called *Práchína viti* makes offerings of water to the *Acharyas* or inspired religious teachers. This is called *Acharya Tarpana* and is regarded as supplementary to the *Rishi Tarpana*.)

The third division of the *Tarpana* ceremony is called *Pitre-Tarpana*—refreshing of the father or progenitors. The thread is worn over the right shoulder as in the *Acharya Tarpana*, but the water is poured out over the side fingers of the palm opposite to the root of the thumb. The words muttered are, "Let the fathers be refreshed, let this water containing *tila* (sisamum) be intended for all who live in the seven worlds as far as the abode of Brahma, the seventh world, though they exceed many millions of families. Let the water be consecrated by my sacred thread, be accepted by those members of our family who have died without sons."¹ This *Tarpana* ceremony is performed sometimes before the *Sandhya Vandhana* or morning prayer.

Next comes the regular *Gayitri Japa* or the recital of the *Gáyitri mantra* 1008 times. This is sometimes reduced to 108 times till the rising of the Sun, *Pranavam*—AUM. is first recited 101 times and then *Vyáhritis*, after which the recital of the *gáyitri* follows :—

The second act in the meditation is called *Pránayamam* (exercise or regulation of breath). This includes three distinct operations, *viz.*, " (1) *Réchaka*, which consists in first pressing in the right nostril with the thumb and expelling the breath through the left and *vice versa*, (2) *Pûraka*, which consists in first pressing in the right nostril with the fore-finger, and drawing in the breath through the right, (3) *Kumbhaka*, which

1. Religious Thought and Life in India by Monier Williams, Page 409—10.

consists in first pressing both nostrils with the finger and thumb and holding in the breath for as long an interval as possible. These preliminary acts which ought to be concluded before the rising of the sun are thought to be useful in fixing the mind, concentrating the thoughts, and bringing the worshipper into an attitude of attention. He is now in a position to begin the recitation of his prayers. They must be introduced by the solemn utterance of the monosyllable 'OM', called (*pranavam*), the sound being prolated to the length of three vowels. The most sacred of all Hindu utterances made up of the three letters AUM, and symbolical of the three manifestations of the one Supreme Being in the gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva is constantly repeated during the Sandhya service. Manu describes it as a monosyllable, imperishable and eternal as the Being himself.¹

These along with *Ashtáksharam* and *Pancháksharam* are called *Chathusantikam*, and no Nambuthiri in Kerala wears the holy ashes before offerings of water to the *Pitris* (departed spirits).

A Brahmana beginning and ending a recital of the Veda or of any holy strain must always pronounce to himself the syllable "OM"; for, unless the syllable "OM" precede, his learning will slip away from him; and unless it follow, nothing will be long retained. The syllable is prefixed to the names of the worlds, which denote that the seven worlds are manifestations of the power signified by that syllable. "As the leaf of the Plásu, says Yāgnavalkya, is supported by a single pedicle, so is this universe upheld by the syllable "AUM" a symbol of the supreme Bramham. All rights ordained in the veda, oblations to fire, and solemn sacrifices pass away; but that which passeth not away, says Manu, is declared to be the syllable "AOM" thence called *Akshara*, since it is a symbol of God, the Lord of created beings.

The next division of the service is *Upasthāna* or *Mitroupasthāna* because the worshipper abandons his sitting posture, stands erect with his face towards the rising sun and invokes that luminary under the name of Mitra. The prayer he now repeats is Rig Veda, Chapter III, verse 59. The translation of the first verse is herein given. At the end, the worshipper

1. Manava Dharma Sastra Chap. II, verse 74-94.

invokes the personified dawns in the following verse : " Hail ! Brilliant dawns, daughters of Heaven ; I invoke you, bearing the oblations as a sign of my devotion ; May we be honoured and the divine earth effect that for us ". The service is now brought to a close.

The midday and the evening *Sandhya* services which are like the morning *Sandhya* except that of the *Upasthana* prayers may not be described in detail here. •

Then comes the ceremony of *Bhasmadharana* or application of holy ashes. This is done by rubbing the ashes taken from the domestic sacred hearth on the head and other parts of the body with the repetition of a prayer to Siva from *Taittiriya Aranyika*, Chapter X, 43 ; " I offer homage to Siva ; May he preserve from me in every birth ; Homage to the source of all birth ". At this time every pious Hindu marks his head with the sacred mark of his own, peculiar to his faith or religious views. The three horizontal lines on the forehead of a Brahman mark him to be a Sivite. The Nambuthiris have the horizontal marks together with the circular or vertical ones, and this shows that he is a non-sectarian in religion.

Preparation of Holy Ashes :—The holy ashes is prepared by taking the cow's excrement and making it into small balls and then drying it in the sun. These are then collected and burned and mixed with water to remove the impurities. The water is then drawn off and the pure mass is then taken and dried ; there are four kinds of ashes, viz., (1) that obtained from a Kapila cow is *Bluti*, (2) that from a black cow is *Bhasitam*, (3) that from a red cow is *Bhasmam*, and (4) that from a white one is *Kshāram*. Wearing of the first brings wealth and gratification of one's desire ; that of the second brings beauty ; that of the third, destruction of all sins ; and that of the fourth, removal of all calamities. The ashes should not be given or received in hand, but must be placed on a piece of plantain leaf with a vessel of water.¹

The next act of the religious service of a *Bramhachari* (vedic student) is the *Samiddhānam* (worship of fire). A married man must perform his *Aupāsana* ceremony every morning and evening with reverential adoration. He feeds the sacred fire with pieces of consecrated wood generally taken from the *plāsu* tree and the offerings of rice and ghee. The

1. Sankara Smrithi. Chap. V,

oblation thus casting into the flame is supposed to ascend to the Sun, says Manu, it falls again in rain, from rain comes food, and from food all animals subsist. It is important to keep the smouldering embers of the sacred element perpetually burning. If through any accident the flame is extinguished, the whole household falls into confusion, everything goes wrong until an expiatory ceremony (*Práyaschitham*), consisting of a solemn fast observed by both husband and wife, is performed and the fire is rekindled. And this daily service is not all. Every fourteenth day is to a very pious and orthodox Hindu a holiday; it is set apart for special religious observances. Then every four months another ceremony called *Cháthurmáśya* sacrifice is performed at the beginning of three seasons. Probably this is solemnised like a harvest thanks-giving in fructitude for the foods of the earth gathered in at the end of the three seasons of summer, autumn and winter. It is conducted with so much solemnity as the fortnightly rite and in much the same manner. Finally, every rich house-holder endeavours once a year to institute what is called *Sóma* sacrifice (*Sóma Yúgam*). After the *Aupásana* ceremony, hymns of the Veda to which he belongs are recited for an hour or two. The other ceremony which is necessary for the completion of the morning *Sandhya* is *Brahma-yajna* (*Swadhyayam*). Some recite vedic hymns and prostrate towards the Sun.

Then commences the religious service called the *Sáligrámapuja* which is generally performed by every pious Nam-buthiri. In this, therefore, homage is paid to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, through images or worship of the five stones or symbols which are believed to be permeated by the essence of the five chief deities. The five stones are, (1) the black stone representing Vishnu, (2) the white stone representing Siva's essence, (3) the red stone representing Ganésa, (4) the small piece of a metallic ore representing the wife of Siva, and (5) the piece of crystal representing the Sun. The first two stones *Saligrama* and *Bhānalīnga* are regarded as far more sacred than manufactured idols, for such idols must be consecrated whereas these stones are occupied by Vishnu and Siva without any consecration whatever. This also is an elaborate ceremony.

There is, however, another important ceremony which ought to precede the midday meal, called the *Vaiswadeva* or offering to all the gods (*Viswa devas*). This is completed with

the performance of another rite called *Bhikṣāna* which is only the concluding act of the former ceremony. In fact, the two ceremonies are complementary to each other, and are regarded as one ceremony. The gods referred to in this ceremony are vedic, and it is therefore from its antiquity very interesting. The idea involved in this service seems to be that before a Brahman begins to eat, he ought to consecrate his food by making offerings of small portions to all the gods, to the manes, to the spirits, and to the guests through whose favour he is himself fed, and more especially to fire, who is the bearer of the offering to Heaven. In fact, the whole ceremonial resolves itself into a form of homage of the gods who give them food and prosperity, and to the god Fire who helps the preparation of the food for eating. There is also a notion that in preparing the food by cooking, animals may have been accidentally destroyed, for which expiation should be made before the dinner is consumed. It should be observed that this ceremony is not like the *Sandhya* incumbent on every individual separately; it may be performed vicariously like *Dēva-puja* through one member of the family acting for the others. After the performance of these ceremonies the process of dining, which is regarded as a religious rite, must be conducted according to prescribed forms. (Vide food).

The fire which witnessed the union of the young couple and which is brought to their home, is placed on the floor of the house consecrated as a sanctuary for its reception and perpetual maintenance. It can never be blown upon with the mouth. Nothing impure is thrown into it, nor is it ever used for warming the feet. According to a verse in the Rig Vēda, the Supreme Being develops the whole order of the existing deities through the operation of heat. According to another verse it is believed that all gods are comprehended in fire. He surrounds them as the circumference of a wheel does the spokes. In fact, it is the embodiment not only of heat but of all Nature. It has the three forms, in the air as the Sun in Heavens. And yet the three forms are often understood in the one form of fire. Hence fire is not only a symbol of the presence of the Supreme Being among men, but is an emblem of His creative fostering and disintegrating energies, a type of His three eternal attributes 'Life, Light and Joy.'

Like Fire the Sun is also worshipped in the *Gáyatri* prayer, though inaccessible and sometimes invisible. In ancient times the householder was contented with what was called *Grihyagni* or house-hold fire and was sufficient for all household purposes. But those who were more pious and wished to engage in vedic rites (*Srauta karma*) took care to construct more elaborate *homa sala* (room for sacrifices on the ground floor) where fire was kindled in three receptacles, fire in each having a different name (*Ahavaniya*, *Garhapatya* and *Dakshina*). When the fire is thus lighted, it was regarded as a sign of God, present in the house as a guest who lived in the family, the divine mediator who bore the flavour of daily offerings to Heaven.

After meals the pious Nambuthiri takes some rest either by taking a short nap or by conversing with some caste-men of his. After an hour or two he engages himself by teaching vedas to some youngsters or read *Puránas* for his own enlightenment and also for that of others in his own family. He is then engaged in the affairs of the family for an hour or two and again at six or even earlier he performs his evening *Sandhya*, goes to the temple to worship the deity, and either performs some *japam* or recites the names of Vishnu or Siva. He then takes his supper and goes to bed.

The women of the family or the wife of the Nambuthiri also bathe early enough, adore the deities in their own temple and make ready everything necessary for the *pújas* to be performed by the house-holder. They attend to the work in the kitchen, and meanwhile worship Ganapathi, Bhagavathi and Siva with due offerings. In the afternoon a few hours are spent in the perusal of the *Puránas* and other sacred books. In the evening also they worship the deities as before and after the supper of males, they partake of the remaining meals and at last retire to bed.

The daily religious observances of the orthodox Nambuthiris thus far described represent the earliest religion of the Brahmans in ancient times, and are continued even to this day. The chief gods were the Fire-god (the earth-born Agni) the Rain-god (the air-born Indra), and the Sun-god (the sky-born Surya, or Savitri), one for each of three worlds earth, air and sky (*Bhur*, *Bhuvah*, *Svar*). All other vedic deities appear to be either modifications of or associated with one or other of the member of the vedic trinity above mentioned. The Fire-god

(Agni) has various attributes. He was the god on the earth and therefore more accessible than other deities. He was also a "domestic god, the father of the sacrifice, the mediator between men and gods, the bearer of hymns and prepares from every family altar upwards towards Heaven". He has been an object of veneration among all nations. Even the Sun-god is considered to be a form of Heavenly fire and is foremost in adoration among all pagan nations.

Ritualistic Brahmanism :—The religion of Brahmins became more and more ritualistic and anthropomorphic. Sacrifice to the gods became more and more complicated. In its purest form it meant some simple gift as an expression of gratitude or a simple thank offering for blessing received and afterwards as an act of propitiation for purely private or selfish ends. The second great aim was to nourish the gods with the essence of offered food, and to strengthen them for their daily duty of maintaining the continuity of the Universe. The third important aim was that of making these oblations of food the means of obtaining boons from these invigorated and gratified deities for the accomplishment of some great object, such as the birth of a son, some supreme human powers and even exaltation to Heaven. The attainment of these desires or purposes gave rise to elaborate and complicated sacrificial rites, such as *Aswamedha*, *Jyotishtoma*, *Agnishtoma*, *Aptoryama* for which an organisation of regularly constituted hierarchy was formed, and to have them carefully performed, the services of the sixteen classes of priests were found necessary for the correct recital of innumerable vedic hymns and texts. These priests were adequately rewarded for their whole course of prayers, praise, ritual and oblations. The sacrifice or *Yajna* as it was called was a chain, every link of which required to be complete and perfect in all its parts. The belief is that the sacrificer could effect anything in this world or the other, even rise to the level of the highest deities. It is the maintainer of the energies of the Universe, and the great source of all benefits. It could bless him with a whole line of sons and grand-sons. It is also believed that Gods themselves attained their celestial position by performing sacrifices; by sacrifices says the *Taittiriya Brahmana*, the gods obtained Heaven.

In course of time, people became tired of offerings and the ceremonies connected with them, and thoughtful men

finding no interest in these external rites took refuge in speculative enquiries and metaphysical investigations, and the chief result of them was the 'excogitation of the Upanishads' or hidden spiritual doctrine of the Veda.

It is said that the Upanishads are the Bible of the phase of Brahmanism, and that many treatises were added to the mantra and Brahmana portion of the Veda, while the aphorisms or the three philosophical systems were their branches namely, Nyāya with Veishēshika, Sāṅkya with Mīmāṃsa were founded on these writings. There are scholars among the Nambuthiris who are proficient in the knowledge of these subjects.

Popular or puranic religion :—Besides the various forms of vedic worship and the ceremonies connected therewith, the Nambuthiris have temples for worship either in their own compounds or in the vicinity of them. There are also grand temples in their important centres and these sacred institutions unlike those of the East Coast in architecture, are dedicated to the superior deities Vishnu and Siva, their consorts and their incarnations in various forms and also to Ganapathi.

A typical temple consists of the *Sri-kōvil* or the principal shrine containing the *Siva-Lingam* or the image of Vishnu or some incarnations of his (Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, etc.). It is generally either a rectangular or circular building with a pyramidal or conical roof which is either tiled or covered with copper plates. The sides consist of a peculiar kind of dense lattice work of wood or mortar standing in a low laterite wall. In some big temples like Trichur and Perumanam, there are more than one of these sacred shrines dedicated to different deities. In front of the *Sri-kovil* is the *mukhamandapam* in which the Brahmans perform their *Namaskārams* (prostrations) and *japams* (meditations). The *Sri-kovil*, *Mukhamandapam* and shrines of minor deities are enclosed in a quadrangular edifice (*nālam-balam*), which consists of low *verandahs* with tiled or thatched roofs; portions of which may be shrines of minor deities. In some temples a portion of this is converted into a room which may serve as a kitchen for performing the offerings (*nivēdyams*) to the deities; and close to this is also a well. All these within the quadrangular edifice constitute what is called *chuttambalam*, surrounding which there is another quadrangular edifice with an elaborate wood-work on which are fixed small iron or

brass hollow vessels shaped like leaves of the pipal tree, to serve as lamps for illuminations on occasions of grand festivals. In front of the entrance of this *nāmbalam* is a *Deepasthambam* (lamp-post), and close to this is also a *Dwaja sthambam* (a wooden post on which a flag is suspended during *Utsavam* or festival in a temple. Around the *Nāmbalam* and at a small distance from it, is the outer wall in the court-yard of which are *Agrasalas* (halls in which Brahmans are fed) and other buildings, while at the entrances are *Gōpurams*, or two storied structures, the general appearance of which says Ferguson, in his History of Architecture, is distinctly Chinese or Mongolian though there does not seem to be sufficient reasons to attribute this to the direct Chinese influence. At a short distance from the outer wall, there is also an *Aswasatham* or Pipal tree with a granite or laterite platform round it. Only Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Ambalavasis and high caste Sudras can enter the *nāmbalam* to worship the deities; while the Tamil and low caste Malayali Sudras are forbidden to enter it, but can come as far as *Bali-kallu* (sacrificial stone) outside the quadrangular edifice. The members of the polluting castes outside the wall can stand near the pipal tree outside the walls for purposes of worship.

Deities in temples.:—As has been already said, Vishnu, Siva and Sakti under various names or shapes, divide the homage of the Hindu religion and these gods and goddesses are represented by images which are either self grown or made by man. In the *Padma Purana* it is said, that the abode of Hari is celebrated by two kinds, namely, the established and the self-revealed. The image of Hari made by stone, earth, wood, metal or the like, and consecrated according to the rites laid down in the *Vedas*, *Smritis*, and *Tantras*, is called the established. Where the Vishnu has placed himself on earth in stone or wood for the benefit of mankind, that is called the self-revealed. Vishnu in the above passage is typical of all deities. (Skandapurana, Uttarakanda). Even in these days the miraculous discovery of divine images is not unknown to the faithful, and a common preliminary to such finds, is that a vision appears in a dream to one of the devout worshippers who communicates the same to his relations and neighbours, when a procession is formed to the spot,

where the image is discovered to the delight of the faithful and to the advantage of the favoured dreamer, who becomes the custodian of the image, which may afterwards be established and consecrated in a temple. But Hindu sages have always treated this form of worship as an inferior one, fit only for those who are unable to grasp the abstract idea of the Supreme Being. This statement will be clear from the following passages: "I am in the fire for those who sacrifice, in the heart of those who recite prayers; in images for those of small understanding; for those of true knowledge, I am everywhere."

Stone images are one of the most common types now prevalent; and stone is now employed for the construction of *Sivalingam*. Special directions are given for the selections of stones for the construction of images. Stones saturated with acid saline or efflorescent substances, those thrown upon the banks of rivers and those found in barren soil and in ant-hills, and warmed by solar rays or burnt by forest fire are to be avoided; stones which are smooth, of uniform colour, lying under ground, untouched by solar rays, immersed in water, are approved. Stones are classified as infant, young, adult, and old according to their scale of hardness. The very soft varieties of stones are rejected, while the medium ones are recommended. The stone thus selected is to be brought and placed in the working shed which is to be erected to the north of the temple, where it has to be worshipped, before being taken in by the sculptor.

For the construction of the image of *Sivalingam*, according to *Brihat Samhita*, the stone is set out in the length of the circumference of the round part, and the whole *phallus* is divided into three portions of which the part of the base must be quadrangular, that in the middle octangular and the rest round. The quadrangular portion is covered in a pit, and the middle member into the cavity of the pedestal, which is visible upwards to its cavity in all directions over an extent equal to its height. The greatest care has to be taken in the construction of these images intended for worship. According to the authority above referred to, an image possessing the required characteristics, bestows prosperity by its very presence. According to another authority the author of an image of Vishnu possessing all the necessary qualities is blessed with long life, while dire consequences are to be apprehended from

the existence of any defect in the image intended for dedication. The gods do not accept the offerings of the men who worship divine image defective in the prescribed characteristics. According to Varāha Mahira, an image with disproportionate limbs bodes peril to the monarch; one with under-sized limbs infirmity to the maker; one with a thin belly, danger of famine; and one that is lean, loss of wealth. When it shows a wound, the death of the maker from the sword may be predicted by being bent to the left. It destroys his wife by being bent to the right. It causes blindness by having its eyes turned upwards, and anxiety by the eyes being downcast. The same sentiments are found more fully developed in the Matsyapurana also.

Siva Lingams are also made from sun-stones, moon-stones, load-stones, diamond, emerald, talc and other kinds of minerals bright as lightning, and self-illuminating at night. Each of them is effective for certain special purposes. The pearl gives fortune. The moon-stone conquers death. The sun-stone gives power; diamonds, emeralds, and crystals fulfil every kind of desire. Images are also made of gold, silver and of baser metals. Of the pure metals, gold, is mentioned in the Aswalayana *Grihya Parsishta*. "The image of the gods should never be made deficient or having an excess of limbs. An image with a hideous face causes the death of the owner. A corpulent image destroys the artist, and an emaciated one destroys wealth. One thin in the middle causes famine, and one without flesh causes loss of wealth. One with a crooked nose causes sorrow and one with a compact body causes fear. A flat nosed one causes trouble and affliction, and one with no eyes destroys the eyes. One with a defective face and one with sparing hands and feet, causes grief. One deficient in limbs and one with short thighs cause terror and madness in men. One with a weary face or one without a waist destroys the king. If the image be without hands or feet, then a great plague is caused; and one without knees or thighs causes the good of the enemy. One without breast destroys children and friends".¹

The consecration ceremony:—As to the parties competent to celebrate the installation, the *Devi Purana* directs that the

1. The Hindu Law of Endowments by Pandit Prannath Saraswati, pages 93, 102-105.

gold image should be installed with due regard to the caste or order of the worshipper. According to *Brihat Samhita* Sambhu is the god of the Brahman. The *Devipurānam* allows all the four castes to worship Vishnu. *Linga Archana Tantra* enjoins the worship of the emblem of Siva upon all the four castes threatening extreme penalties for non-compliance. The ceremonies connected with the construction, ablutions, vivification, *hómam*, and the setting up of images, are very elaborate, and is therefore omitted for want of space. By the last process of vivification the image from the previous status, as an inanimate object, acquires the status of a sacred entity or ideal personality possessing superhuman powers.

The worship of the gods is one of the daily duties of the Brahmans. Enjoined by Parasara and Manu, 276—describes the following as part of the duties of the Brahmachari. "Day by day, having bathed and purified, let him offer fresh water to the gods, the sages and manes; Let him show respect to the images of the deities; and bring wood for the oblation to the fire." A house-holder or a *Grihasta* is also required by Manu in Chapter IV, Verse 56, to adore the gods at the beginning of the day. When an idol has thus been consecrated by appropriate ceremonies, the deity of which the idol is the visible image, resides in it.

The daily routine of pujas performed in a temple:— The *pūja* in a temple may be said to begin at 4 P. M. daily when the doors of the *Sri-kovil* are opened at that hour. The senior priest after bath enters the temple with his assistants, opens the doors of the *Sri-kovil* where the god resides to the booming of the conch shell of the *Máran*. The old flowers (*nirmályam*) dress, jewels with which the god or goddess was decorated is removed, and the image is then washed (*abhishékam*) and bathed with water with the recital of the vedic hymns. After this the deity is well rubbed, and then dressed in newly washed clothes and decorated with flowers and jewels, and a *Pushpúnjeli* or an offering of flowers is then made. This is followed by the offering of food or *nivedium*, which is generally *malar* (parched rice). This closes the *pūja* of the morning or *Usha pūja*.

At 7 o'clock begins another *pūja* and *nivedium*, when the *Nirmályam* flowers (*Prasadam*), water (*Thirtham*), are given by the priest to the people that have assembled there at

the time. In some temples, the image of the deity is then taken out by a *Múthathu* around the *Nalambalam* in procession with music and tom tom, when the priest makes offerings to the minor deities and demons (*Bhutas*), and after its return to the Srikovil another offering of *nivedium* is made.

About 10 A. M., commences the *Panthiradi* or forenoon *púja*, and the same items as mentioned above are gone through and offerings of cooked rice, *Páyasam*, etc., are made. At the conclusion of this *púja* the offerings are partly distributed among the servants of the temple. In some temples as Thiruvanchikulam, there is also another *púja* at noon (*Ucha Púja*), when similar formalities are gone through. Then there is no *púja* till the close of the day, and the priest and others have some rest.

The evening *púja* begins at 6 P. M., or even earlier, when the *Deepárádhana* (waving of lights) forms one of the important occasions for worship. The image is then neatly decorated with jewels, sandal paste, flowers, silks and cloths, and the inner shrine is brilliantly lighted. At this time the temple is very much crowded and very few who could afford would be absent there then. On important occasions men, women, and children crowd in at the time in large numbers. *Deepárádhana* is accompanied with the playing of flutes, drums and the ringing of bells when the devotees sing *slóka*s (verses) in praise of the deity. *Prasádams* are then distributed to the worshippers. Then the last *púja* for the night is the *Ardhajáma Púja*, the course of worship is almost the same as that described above. The *nivedium* alone is different, and consists of sugar-cakes, cooked rice, sweet and beaten rice, honey, fruits, green cocoanuts, and betel leaves. The daily round of *púja* then terminates with this at about 9 or 10 P. M.; and all the priests and servants leave the shrine, and the senior priest, being escorted by a servant with a *kodivilakku* or a portable metal lamp, which is another emblem of his dignity and status. It must be mentioned, in this connection, that the chief priest, *Mel-Sánthikáran* (senior priest) alone is privileged to touch the image to which *pújás* are offered. The *Kizhsánthikáran* (his assistant) can only assist him in his work. This is a great privilege to them in the temples of this coast, as no worshipper, however high his position may be, can touch the image, anoint it or place flowers over it. During *Utsavams* (festivals) and other

special ceremonial occasions the *Tantri Nambuthiripad* performs the *Sri-Bhuta Beli*, which is an important item during these ceremonies. It is believed that any mistake, however small, in the performance of this rite, whether committed by the *Tantri* or the *Maran* who beats his drum in measure to the quick *Tantram*—passes of the Nambuthiri will seriously injure the *Tantri*, the *drummer* and the *Bhutams*, whom the *pūjas* are intended to propitiate.

Besides the priests and their assistants already mentioned, every temple has its own staff of servants and servant-maids, such as the light carriers, the musicians, the *Máráns*, whose business it is to sing and sound the conch-shell, flute, the *takil* or the drum, and the *pīni*, another drum that gives a shrill note. The sweepers, the cooks, the vessel-cleaners, water-drawers and the accountants, the guards, the hereditary singers, the garland makers, etc. "Thus a high caste Hindu temple on this coast is a centre of attraction to the old and the young by its perfect system of worship, by the piety and peace it breathes, its remarkable neatness, its marvellous punctuality and the regularity in the performance of the daily *pūjas* and the active benefits which it dispenses, and more than all, the devotion, the reverence and the order which it inculcates on the thousands of votaries that visit it."¹

Besides the orderly routine of the daily *pūjas* in temples, there are some festivals (*Utsavams*) attached to each in certain months of the year. In this connection, it will be interesting to give the origin of some of the most important temples of the State, with the festivals celebrated in each.

(1) *Vadakkunnathan temple*.—This temple is by far the most important of the religious institutions in the State. It is called *Vrishabadri* in ancient writings, and a full description of the origin and sanctity of this temple is found in *Kerala Mahātmyam* and *Narasimha Puranam*. The temple is said to have been built and consecrated by the great Parasurama after the reclamation of Kerala from the sea, and its situation is on an elevated ground in the Trichur town, which is almost the centre of Kerala. It was for a long time under the management of *Yogādripad Sanyasis*, installed from time to time, and after the death of the last incumbent in 930 M. E., and after a period of hostilities with the Zamorin, the undisputed right of His

1. The Travancore State Manual, Vol. II, Chap. VIII, page 77.



PERUMIANAM TEMPLE

Highness the Raja of Cochin to manage the affairs of the temple was established in 938 M. E. In the year 945 M. E., a great *Kalāsam* was performed to purify the temple. Since then, it has been under the management of the Government. It is one of the richest temples in the State. Festivals connected with it are the *Pūram* in the month of Medom, and the *Sivarāthri* which falls in Kumbham.

(2) *Perumanam temple*.—This temple is a very important one, both in antiquity and sanctity. It is said to be in existence with the origin of Kerala and the advent of Pafasurama. Of the 64 *grāmams* into which the kingdom was divided by Parasurama, the temple was built and consecrated for the benefit of the Perumanam *Yogakkārs* who managed it through three *Urallars* as their special agents. In 969 M. E. the *Yogakkārs* surrendered their rights of management to the then governing Raja of Cochin. The temple was brought under Government control in 1028 M. E. It is said that an *Utsavam* for 28 days used to be conducted in this temple about 1300 years ago, but was since discontinued, and that the present festival called *Puram*, celebrated in Meenom, took its place. This temple is an equally important one as the Trichur temple.

(3) *Thiruvilvamala temple*.—This temple is another equally important one both in sanctity and as a place of pilgrimage. It is built on the summit of a small hill about two miles to the south of the Lakādi Railway Station. It is said to have been consecrated by Parasurama, as an act of penance. It was brought under Sirkar management in 994 M. E. and prior to that date it was under six *Urallars*, called *Parasudayavars*, clearly signifying that they were appointed by Parasurama. The most important annual festival in the temple is the Krishna *Ekādesi* in the month of Kumbham, which attracts a large crowd from various parts.

(4) *Thiruvanchikulam Temple*.—This temple is one of the very ancient temples in South India. It is said to be what *Chembaram* in eastern districts, and it is even sometimes called *Kizh-Chithambaram* (lower *Chithambaram*). This second temple is generally believed to have been built and dedicated by Cheraman Perumal from whom the ownership and management of the temple passed to the Raja of Cochin who handed it over to the Sirkar in 993 M. E. There were no separate *Urallars* or managers till 993 M. E. The management

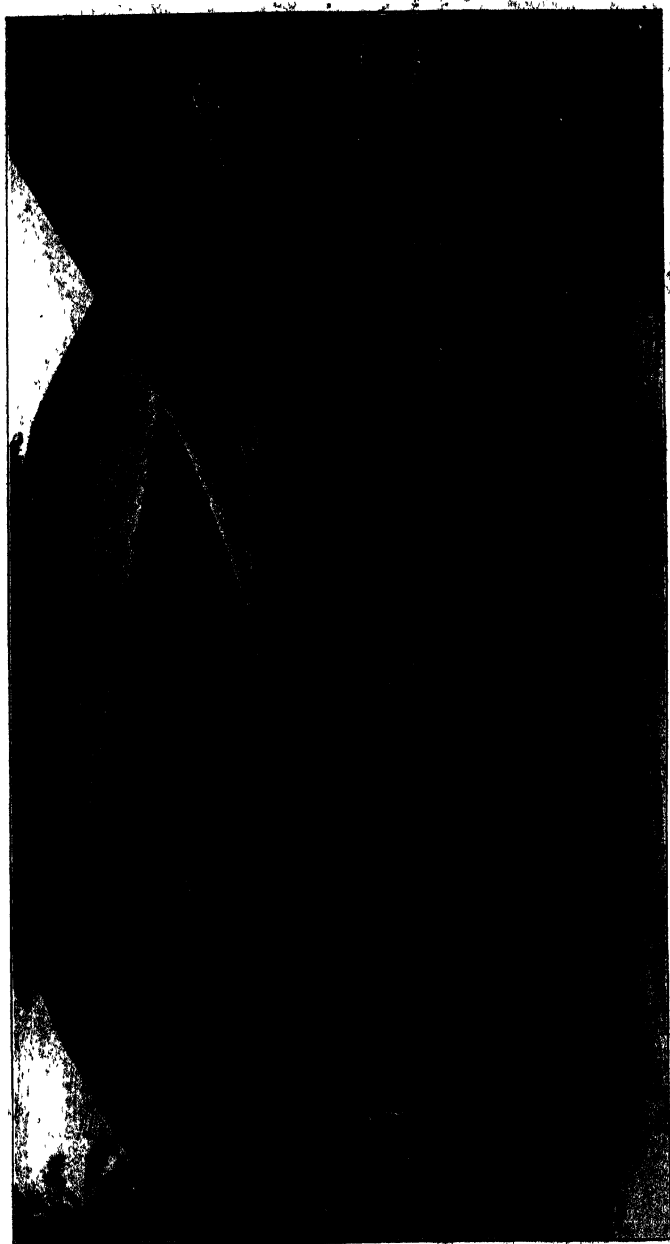
seems to have been vested in the *Veluthu* Nambiyar, belonging to the present Moothathu family, under His Highness' *Thitturam*. *Sivaráthri* is the important festival in this temple. The daily routine of *pújas* here is somewhat peculiar and different from that in other temples of the State.

(5) *Trippunithura temple*.—This temple is one of great antiquity and one of the most important of sacred institutions close to the residence of His Highness the Raja and the members of the Royal family. The image of Balakrishna is said to have been installed by Arjuna on the fifty-first day after the commencement of Kaliyuga, and the date is remembered by the mnemonic "Padmam." The *Utsavam* in the temple falls in the month of *Vrischigam* (November).

Ganapathi and Ganapathi Homam.—Ganesa or Vigneswara is the most popular god worshipped by the Nambuthiris and all other classes of Brahmans especially by the Sivites. Vigneswara means remover of obstacles, and his blessings are invoked for success in the performance of religious acts, and in fact, before the commencement of any undertaking. He is considered to be the embodiment of wisdom and shrewdness, patience and self reliance, and in fact every quality that lead to success in life. Every Indian book opens with *Ganesayanamah* (salutation to Ganapathi). In every Nambuthiri house Ganapathi is propitiated and this propitiation (*Ganapathi Homam*) was introduced by Parasurama.

For *Ganapathi Homam* a pit 4 feet by 2 feet (*hōmakundam*) is made in the central part of the room. Fire is lit in the pit with dried jack-wood and cocoanut husks, and the offerings consist of rice, fried rice (*malar*), cocoanuts, plantains, plantain fruits, sugar-cane, sugar, honey, ghee and sweetmeats which are put in the fire with the recital of holy *mantrams*. The smoke arising therefrom fills the house with a healthy sweet smell all around. In every Sivite temple, there is a small shrine dedicated to Ganapathi.

Utsavam in a typical temple.—Every temple has its *Utsavam* or festival once in a year and lasts either for five days in some or seven in others. It begins with the *Kodiyéttam* or the hoisting of the flag. Every day both in the morning at 8 and 4 o'clock in the evening, the images of the gods or goddesses with all the attractive paraphernalia are taken in procession round the *chuttambalam* on elephants with a grand display of



THIRUVANCHIKULAM TEMPLE (INNER SHRINE)



TRICHUR PURZNI

drum-beating, and other musical instruments at the close of which the Brahmans are treated to a feast of *kāṅgi*, *pappadam*, pieces of cocoanut, with sugar and a sour vegetable curry. There is the same kind of grand procession with the images mounted on elephants which lasts for two or three hours; the interval between 8 and 4 o'clock being taken up by a variety of amusements. There is also a grand feast to the Brahmans assembled there then. A similar procession at 1 P. M., with bright illuminations round the temple attracts a large number of spectators. Various kinds of dramatic performances peculiar to Malabar are acted during night. Thus the festival is continued for seven days. On the night of the last day there is a grand display or fire-works. On the night previous to the last, the deity is taken to a neighbouring place, where the god is supposed to hunt. This procession is called *Pallivetta* which with the *Arat* is supposed to cause pollution which is removed by a bath for purification on the last day. The *Arat* is an imposing ceremony on the last day which attracts a large number of people. The procession with the image on a well decorated elephant advances to the bathing ghat which may be either a tank, river or sea near which the temple is situated, and there the elephant is bathed and the image is purified by a bath with the recital of holy *mantrams*. The people in the procession also bathe and become purified by the sanctified water. The elephant with the image on him returns in procession to the temple and the image is made to resume its usual seat and the flag is then hoisted down. The festival is then brought to a close.

Kadavallur Varam.—The three vedas (Tri-Vidya) Rig, Yajus and Sama Veda are current among the Nambuthiris, and the first two have a large number of followers among them. The Sama Vedis in the State are confined to about 24 families, and belong to the school of the *Jaiminas* while the *Kousitaki* and *Aswalāyana* sections of the Nambuthiris have one and the same *Samhita* text of the Rig Veda though with different Brahmanas and Sutras. For the advanced studies of the Rig Veda, there exist two advanced rival colleges or *Mutts*, one at Trichur and the other at Thirunavai in South Malabar, each managed by its own hereditary *Vādhyān* or managing teacher. These ancient vedic institutions were richly endowed and patronized by the Raja of Cochin and the Zamorin of Calicut, the rulers

of the two rival kingdoms of ancient Malabar. All the Rig Vedic Nambuthiris of Malabar, Cochin and Travancore belong to either the one or the other of these institutions. Every year pupils from the rival institutions meet at the temple of Kadavallur during the *Mandalam* (forty-one days) to compete "Whole-heartedly" for the verdict of proficiency. The syllabus consists of the texts of the Rig Veda in the four forms of the *Pada-pátha*, *Krama-pátha*, *Jada-pátha* and *Ratha-pátha*. The last which is the most complicated and a difficult mode of recitation, is based on the *Krama-pátha* method. It may be described thus: "If one *anta* or half verse consists of four words, a, b, c, d, these must be grouped in the following order. ab, ba, ab, bc, cba, ab, bc, cd, dcba; and ab, bc, cd, and d. The symbolic representation, and teaching of the *Padapátha* and the more elaborate methods of recitation based on it seem to be peculiar to, if not a special invention of the Nambuthiris of Malabar. All the verses that are analysed in the *Pada* text, and these only are much mechanically reproduced with exactness, being communicated and taught by means of a series of finger and palm signs, are symbols resembling those of the deaf, dumb alphabets".¹ This course is also taught in the two vedic colleges above mentioned. In this connection, it will be interesting to give an account of how the comparative vedic recitation for proficiency takes place in the temple of Kadavallur. The vedic recitation takes place in temple for forty-one days, sixteen of which are assigned to the competition for proficiency. In this *Ekúdesi* and *Vávu*—eleventh day after the full-moon and the new-moon,—are eliminated on the 30th day of Thulam, the competitors after worshipping the deity Dekshinamurthy at the Chovaram village, reach the aforesaid temple in the evening. From that day until it is over the Trichur *Yogakkár*, i. e., the disciples of the Trichur college and the Thirunavai *Yogakkár* (disciples of the Thirunavai college are lodged in the Moothathu houses, *Achu Moothathu* and *Pakshiyil Moothathu* respectively. It is there that the *Yogakkárs* are sumptuously fed during the day. In the temple the two parties occupy two separate halls during prayers, and do not freely mingle with one another during these days of competition.

The vedic students rise early morning at 4 A. M. every day, bathe and go to the temple at 6 o'clock., and perform

1. The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, July 1920, page 630. •



VEDIC STUDENTS WITH THEIR GURU OR PRECEPTOR.

Namaskārams to the deity (*Sri-Rāma*) in the temple with the recital of the vedic hymns. This continues till about 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock, when they go to their respective lodging, perform their noon-day prayers, and dine in the houses where they stay. At about 3 o'clock the competitors place a small sum of money in the presence of the few senior members, who are privileged to sit on a grass mat on the floor, when they bow before them. Immediately after, the Moothathu or *Aka-Pothuval* takes the money with the permission of the *Sabhakkar*—elderly members—and under their directions, illuminates the *Sri-kovil*, decorates the image Sri-Rama and makes offerings of sweet bread to the deity, which are afterwards distributed among the Brahmans assembled in the temple. The competitors bathe and return to the temple to worship the deity, with the hope of success in their aspiration for vedic proficiency. At 4 P. M., the vedic students rubbing their bodies with gingelly oil, bathe in the tank close by, cleaning themselves with country soap. They all return to the temple to worship the deity as before. It is interesting to note the earnestness and the sincerity with which the young students worship the deity, performing *Namaskārams* (prostrations) with the recital of the vedic texts. No Sudras are allowed to enter the *Nālabalam* during these periods, and even Tamil Brahmans are sparingly allowed to be in their midst. Brahman women also are forbidden to enter the *Nālabalam* during these periods. After the usual evening service in the temple, the man who performs the *Vāram* places a sum of money necessary for the expenses of the feast. Moothathus Manakulam, Punnathur, Ainikkur Nampitis and Chakkiyars are all allowed to celebrate the festival in the temple at their own expenses.

The young vedic student from one of the parties worships the deity in the temple, takes his seat in the *Koothambalam*. A few senior members proficient in the vedic study from each party sit by his side; a portion of the text for recitation is selected by the members of the rival party. The judges watch him very closely, and a detection of any error in it, will lead to his failure, and a correct recitation will end in their applause. After this commences the second *Vāram*, for which a student from the other party takes his seat as before in the midst of the senior members who act as judges. A portion is selected for him to recite. The bystanders are anxious to see whether he recites

correctly or commits an error. The third one is called *Koottu Vāram* for which a few members from each party recite conjointly. After this, pujas are performed to the deity and this is followed by *Sri-veli*, when the deity is taken round the *Nalambalam* in procession to the accompaniment of the sound of musical instruments. Lastly, the members of each party sit in order in the special seats allowed to them, where they are treated to a feast and during this time two young disciples commence to recite a special portion on the *Ratha* method. Even if they commit an error they are coached up until they finish. During the first four and the last four days vedic texts are recited on the *Ratha* style, while in the intervening eight days the recitations are on the *Jata* style. The Pujas are performed and offerings to the deity made with the greatest care during these days, lest any defect in them might in their opinion lead to the divine displeasure. There are no such institutions for those who follow *Yajur* veda and *Sama* veda, but the recital takes place in some of their temples during certain months of the year. The *Yajur* veda current among the Nambuthiris is that of the *Taittiriya* school of the so called 'Black recension of this veda'. Its *Apasthamba* sub-division is said to have existed in Malabar until very recently, but is now extinct. All the *Yajur* vedic Nambuthiris belong to the Baudhayana school, while the remaining few represent the *Bādhulaka* section. The latter appears to be the followers of *Vāddhūna Sūtra* mentioned by Mahadeva in the introduction to his commentary on the *Kalpa Sūtra* of Satyasadha Hiranyakesin. The only different one existing between these two schools—Baudhayanas and Badhulakas—is to be found in their vedic ritual and ceremonies, not in their vedic texts, both the *Samhita* and the *Brahmana* being the same for both.

The custom and manners observed by the Nambuthiris are strictly those laid down in the *Sāṅkara Smṛithi* and Sankarachariyar is reputed to be the author of this important treatise. To the Hindu population of these parts, his life and personality is of special interest and value, and a brief account of him here is necessary.

Sri Sankarachariar was a Nambuthiri Brahman of the Kaipilly Illom (a Nambuthiri house) in Kāladi, a place six miles off from the Angamāli Railway station on the Cochin-Shoranur line. This house has long since vanished, but the

spot whereon it stood was enclosed by a wall, and is now marked by a banyan tree. His parents, Sivaguru and Sri-devi, who were both devout worshippers of Siva, were for a long time childless, and after years of prayers and penance, they were blessed with one whom they named Sankara after their favourite deity. The date of his birth is even now a matter of controversy, some placing it as early as the third century, while others to 785 A. D. 825 and A. D. respectively, but the orthodox traditionists put it at years before the Christian Era. Sankara was five years of age when his father died, but before his death he performed for his illustrious son the ceremony of *Upanayanam* (investiture of holy thread). According to another tradition, current among the people of Kerala, he lost his father during his third year, after which both the mother and the son were under the protection of their relatives, one of whom performed for him the ceremony above referred to, in his fifth year. The latter version is not accepted by the *Sringeri-Mutt*. The boy grew to a prodigy in his eighth year and was well-versed in the study of the *Véda*s and *Sastras*; but against the wishes of his mother he resolved to become a *Sanyasi*. There is a popular tradition in support of this. One day the mother and son went to bathe in the river close by, which was then in flood; and as he was having his plunge, he felt that a crocodile was dragging him by the foot. He then cried aloud to his mother that he was about to die, and wished to have the satisfaction of dying as a *Sanyasi*, because he might then depart in peace. His mother could not then hesitate, and told him that he was a *Sanyási*. Luckily he had a narrow escape from the calamity. Henceforth he was an ascetic though he was not ordained to be one.

Sankara took leave of his mother, promising to be by her side during her last days. He became a disciple of Govindaswamy², whom he always styled *Govinda Bhagavat Pádar* and from whom he learned *Vedanta Sûtras*, *Karmā Sûtras*, and other works of philosophy, and soon mastering them he prepared his admirable commentaries on the chief *Upanishads*, *Gita* and *Vedānta Sûtras*. In his sixteenth year he was ordained an

1. According to a recent astrological calculation (1) Saka year 728, (2) Vikrama year 863, (3) 805 A. D. (4) Kali year 3907.

2. According to one account his hermitage was on the bank of the Narbada, while according to another in the Himalayas.

ascetic under the spiritual tutelage of his illustrious *guru*, and with his blessings went to Kasi (Benares), where he worshipped the God Viswanátha and paid his respects to the renowned Vyasa, to whom he submitted his commentaries for approval.¹ Thoroughly satisfied with his works Vyasa blessed him, and by his advice Sankara travelled throughout India, preaching the Vedantic creed and successfully refuting the professors of various religious sects. It is said that he spent two years in Benares, where he met two of his famous disciples (Padmapadachariar and Thotakachariar), to whom he taught his commentaries, and that along with them he went to Prayag (Allahabad) and bathed in Trivéní (the confluence of the three rivers) in honour of his mother. He met Kumárala Bhatta who is said to have ground the *Bhuddhas* and Jains in oil-mills, and who was then on the point of death. Kumarala declined to argue with Sankara, but referred him to Mandanamisra who was married to his younger sister Sárada, believed to have been an incarnation of Saraswathi, on account of her great learning. Sankara introduced himself to Mandanamisra, whom he defeated in argument in the presence of his wife. The latter subsequently challenged him on all the Sûtras with a view to defeat him. As Sankara still remained invincible, she hit upon the expedient of testing him in the science of love or *Kâmasâstra*. Being unable to meet her in argument, Sankara resolved to obtain a short respite to enable himself to study the subject. He went to Amritapura, where he animated the dead body of Prince Amaru, in whose form he acquired familiarity with the subject by practice in the gratification of the passions; and on his return, was victorious over Sarada. The throne of Saraswathi on which he then sat is still shown in Kashmir.

Consecrating Mandanamisra as a *Sanyâsi* (ascetic) under the name of Suréswâracharya, he bound Saraswathi with spells, and conveyed her to Sringeri where he established a throne for her. After this incident Sankara became famous in all the Indian States of the time, and this led to future achievements. He established several monasteries or *Mutts*, the chief of which are those of Badrinath in the North, Jagannath in

1. According to another account, he became a *Sanyasi* even earlier, and prepared his commentaries under orders of Visweswara or Siya whom he met at Benares. He went from Benares to Badrinath where he prepared them.

the East, Sringeri in the South, and Dwarka in the West ; to the headship over each of which he appointed one of his chief disciples. These religious establishments have a complete organization and a regular provision for self-perpetuation, so that the spiritual powers of the first head of the community were transmitted by a kind of 'apostolical succession' through a line of succeeding heads regularly elected. Having set up a *Sivalingam* at Kedárnath, he returned by way of Ayódhya, Gaya and Jagannáth to Sri Saila. On his way he established the four Mutts at Trichur ; two of which (*Thekkematam* and *Natuvilmatam*) are even now in existence and are presided over by Nambuthiri *Sanyásis* who have descended in a regular line of succession from the original head of the Mutts. After this Sankara resolved to go to Benares, but changing his mind he returned to his native village, conscious of the approaching death of his mother, whom he found in a dying condition. He offered up prayers in honour of Siva and Vishnu on her behalf, and thereby obtained salvation for her.

There are traditions which refer to the various difficulties to which his relatives and village folk exposed him. They threw obstacles in the way of his orthodox ceremonials of cremation, and he was so helpless that with the help of some Sudras he was forced to make a sacrificial pit, and there consigned his mother's mortal remains. For this the Brahmans of the Pázhur village were so cursed that they cannot become *Sanyasis* even to this day, nor receive *Sanyasis* as guests in their own *Illams*. It is said that, in memory of this, he ordained that Sudras can help at the funerals of Nambuthiris—a custom which, however, is reprobated on the East Coast. Another custom which he is said to have introduced is that every dead Nambuthiri body should be touched with a knife at various points to show that the same procedure was followed by him for his mother's cremation. It was at this time that he is believed to have composed the Sankara Smrithi, which laid down rules for the conduct of the Nambuthiris as well as others.

Contracting some dangerous disease during his travels through Hindustan, he died at the age of thirty-two. Several places (Badrinath, Conjeevaram, Kedárnath and Sringeri) contend for the honour of having been his last resting place. If Madhwa's account of Sankara is reliable, then probably the last is his true resting place ; further the succession of the *Gurus* at

Sringeri is traced from him directly, and a small temple is there shown as the place where he disappeared from life. It contains an image of him seated after the manner of Buddhist and Jain images. The Sringeri Mutt, basing its authority on a Sanskrit work Sankara-dig-vijayam, compiled by Vidyaran-yaswami, says, that travelling *via* Haridwar, Rudra-padam, Gauri-Sankar, he went to Kailas alive. There is also a tradition in Kerala that he 'shuffled off his mortal coil' from Sri Mula-sthānam in Trichur.

The fame and influence of the great man are perpetuated in his writings. He is the most famous of all commentators, and chief among his works are the commentaries on the Upanishads, *Vedānta Sūtras*, *Bhagavat Gita*, *Vishnu Sahasranamam* and *Soundarya Lahari*. He it was who founded the sect of *Vedantists* who have always held the highest reputation for learning, and the cultivation of Sanskrit vedic literature. As an unsectarian he admitted all other objects of worship, believing them to be manifestations of Siva or Mahadeva—the Great God.

The vedantic system advocated by Sankara is pantheistic and based on the doctrine of Advaita or non-dualism, which means that the Universe is not distinct from the Supreme soul. The leading tenet of the sect is the recognition of Brahman, Para Brahman, as the only really existing Being, the sole cause and supreme ruler of the Universe, as distinct from Siva, Vishnu and Brahma, or any individual member of the Pantheon. To know Him is to know the supreme god. The attainment of this complete wisdom results in *Mukti*, or liberation, and reunion with the divine essence. But as the mind of man cannot elevate itself to the contemplation of the inscrutable first cause, he may be contemplated through the prescribed rites and exercises. The creed thus tolerates the worship of all the Hindu deities.

It is said that Sankara did not found any Sivite sect properly so called, and that, even before his time, there were several Sivite sects embracing within their folds a large portion of the Hindu population of the country. His primary object was to root out Buddhism from the country, and in order to attain that end, he countenanced every form of Hinduism including the worship of Siva, Vishnu, Sakti and Ganesa. He himself had great faith in the Vedantic doctrine of one God manifesting

himself by the creation of the Universe ~~without the help of~~ the *Prakrithi* or material basis. He did not discard the Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, and it seems very probable that either he or his disciples gave great encouragement to Sivite worship in order to render Buddhistic worship obsolete. Nowhere, however, is Sankara mentioned as a destroyer of Buddhist temples and images. In all probability, he and his disciples took these shrines under their protection, and found it much safer to represent the idols worshipped therein as the Hindu God Siva, than to throw them away into the streets or destroy them. Even now such images are adored as those of Siva. There are other instances to show that Sankara encouraged the worship of the Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. The presiding deity of Saraswathi, or the Goddess of learning at Sringeri, the Vishnavite temple at Bhadrinath in the Joshinath Mutt on the Hymalayan slopes, are cases in point.

Whatever Sankara's faith may have been, his followers are practically Sivites. The Smártha Brahmans who acknowledge him as their principal teacher are all professed Sivites. Sankara did not admit any nuns into his monasteries, and the monks of the various orders are called *Dāsanāmis* from their using one or another of ten surnames. The surnames are derived from the names of academic titles of ten disciples of Sankara's immediate pupils. The first three, Saraswathi, Bhārati and Puri, are supposed to have been attached to the Sringeri Mutt. Thirthās and Sāgaras to the Sārada Mutt at Dwāraka, Vanas and Aranyas to the Goverdhana Mutt or Puri; Giri, Parvata, Sagara, to the Joshinath Mutt on the Hymalayas. Monks bearing the names of Aranya, Sagara, and Parvatha, however, are not to be met with now-a-days.

To commemorate the birth place of the Great Sankara and the cremation ground of his mother at Kāladi, the present Svamiyar of the Sringeri Mutt built two temples in February 1910, in the most scientific manner (Balachakram). In one of these is located the image of his first illustrious predecessor, and in the other his favourite Goddess (*Sārāswathi*), while around her, are seven other minor Goddesses, namely, Bramhi, Maheswari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, Varāli, Indrāni, and Chamundi. A few yards to the south of these sacred edifices and midway between them is the holy banyan tree at the base of which the God

Ganapathy is established. Thus on the twelfth day after new moon (Dwādesi-Monday) were established Gods and Goddesses, nine in number, according to the holy rites of vedic ceremonies which were most faithfully and earnestly performed. Eight days prior to the installation of the images, vedic ceremonies began, and the images were consecrated by His Holiness, who invited Brahmans and other classes of Hindus from all parts of India to witness the ceremony. Thus what was once a ruinous village has now become a famous place of pilgrimage.

These in general differ from those of the Brahmans of the other coast in many important particulars. Customs and manners peculiar to the Nambuthiris. There are, it is said, sixty-four rules of conduct (*anācharams*), observed by Nambuthiris, for which they are even now ridiculed by their fellowmen of other parts. There is no reason why they should be objects of ridicule for their observance of these customs which are the outcome of certain peculiar social environments. Tradition generally attributes their introduction to the great Vedantist and reformer Sri Sankara Achariyar about 1100 A. D., while a few of them evidently owe their origin to Parasurama himself. There are, it is said, four *achārams* and sixty *anāchārams*; and only some of these latter, strictly called *Keralāchārams*, are peculiar to Malabar. These are given below in their order:—

1. You must not cleanse your teeth with sticks.

The substitute employed by the Nambuthiris, in fact, by the people in Malabar in general, is the charred husk of paddy.

2. You must not bathe with clothes on your person.

This practice is repugnant to the other Brahmans, whose codes forbid bathing in a nude state.

3. You must not rub your body with the clothes worn on your person.
4. You must not bathe before sunrise.
5. You must not cook your food before you bathe.
6. Avoid the water kept aside during the night.
7. You must not have any particular objects in view while you bathe nor make *Sankalpa* preliminary to a bath.

The other Brahmans must make the *Sankalpa*, an invocation to the water Goddesses, for the bestowal of the spiritual benefit of the bath.

8. The remainder of the water taken for one purpose must not be used for another purpose.
9. You must bathe if you touch another person.
10. You must bathe if you touch polluted wells or tanks.
11. You must bathe if you happen to approach any of the polluting castes.
12. You must not tread over a place that has been cleansed with a broom until it has been sprinkled with water.

This practice of sprinkling water after the sweeping with a broom is not required in the East Coast unless the ground has been specially polluted or is to be used for the performance of a religious rite.

13. Put on the forehead a particular mark with ashes. Put three horizontal lines on the forehead with pure, burnt cow-dung.
14. You must repeat mantras yourself.

This means that the Nambuthiri shall be his own priest, not repeating the mantras at the dictation of a priest. The other Brahmans must have an officiating priest even if the Karta (doer) knows the mantras himself.

15. You must avoid cold rice.
16. You must avoid leavings of the meals of children.
17. You must not eat anything that has been offered to Siva.
18. You must not touch the food with the hand, when serving it.
19. You must not make use of the ghee of buffaloes for *Hómam*.
20. You must not use buffaloes' milk or ghee for general ceremonies.

No such prohibition seems to be observed by the other classes of Brahmans though preference is, of course, given to cow's milk or ghee.

21. Take your meals in such a way as not to necessitate taking out any portion of the morsel once put into the mouth.

This a very wholesome habit most religiously observed by the Nambuthiris. Even the most ceremonious Brahmans of the other coast will be content with putting aside the remnant of a handful in a corner of the leaf on which the food is served. This will not do for the Nambuthiris.

22. You must not chew betel while you are polluted.

23. You must observe the conclusion of the Brahmachari period.

This is the Samavarthanam ceremony already referred to, and should be celebrated at the conclusion of the Brahmacharyam.

24. You must give presents to your *Guru* or Preceptor.

This means that the Brahmachari before formally concluding the *Brahmacharyasramam* should give presents or *Dakshina* to his *Guru* or Preceptor.

25. You must not repeat the Vedas on the road.

26. You must not sell women (receive money for girls given in marriage).

This is an unnecessary prohibition in the case of the Nambuthiris as matters now stand.

27. You must not fast in order to obtain fulfilment of your desires.

Absolute fasting is unknown in Malabar.

28. Bathing is all that woman should observe if she touches another who is in her menses. A man should change his thread and undergo sacred ablution. Women in their menses are not required to keep aloof as with the other Brahman women.

29. Brahmans should not spin cotton.

30. Brahmans should not wash clothes for themselves.

On the other coast, no religious Brahman will touch clothes washed by washermen without their being first dipped in water.

31. Kshatriyas should avoid worshipping the Lingam.

32. Brahmans should not accept funeral gifts from Sudras.

33. Perform the anniversary of your father, father's father, mother's father, and both grand-mothers.

34. Anniversary ceremony should be performed at the end of the year counting from the day of death.

36. *Diksha* should be observed till the end of the year after death.

37. *Sradhas* should be performed according to the days of asterism of death.

The anniversary of a person's death is regulated not by the days after full or new moon as on the other coast but by the days of asterism of death.

38. The funeral ceremony should not be performed until after the pollution caused by child-birth has been removed.

39. An adopted son should perform *Srādha* for his adoptive parents as well as his natural parents.

In other parts of India the adopted son is relieved of the obligation to his natural parents.

40. The corpse of man should be burnt in his own compound, i. e., not in public cremation grounds as among the people of the East Coast.

This custom is said to have been initiated by Sankara Achariyar himself, who, being refused help by the Nambuthiris in the cremation of his dead mother, was driven to the extreme necessity of burning the corpse in the compound of his own house.

41. *Sanyasis* should not look at women.

42. They should renounce all worldly pleasures.

43. *Srādha* should not be performed for deceased *Sanyasis*.

Arādhana Srādhas are performed in their honour by the Brahmans of the East Coast.

44. Brahman women must not look at any men other than their own husbands.

45. They must not go out unless accompanied by maid-servants. Nayar women always go in front of Nambuthiri female to warn people of their coming and keep men out of their way.

46. They should wear only white clothes.

No Brahman female on the other coast, whose husband is alive, will wear white clothes.

47. The nose should not be pierced.

Outside Malabar the noses of Brahman women are always bored.

48. Brahmans should be put out of their caste if they drink any liquor.

49. They should forfeit their caste if they have intercourse with any Brahman women other than their wives.

Both these rules, every Brahman is required to strictly observe, but the infringements are seldom punished with the ostracism they rightly deserve.

50. The consecration of evil spirits should be avoided, i. e., the worship of ancestors should not be performed in the temples.
51. Sudras and others should not touch the idol in a temple.
52. Anything that is offered to one God should not be offered to another.
53. Marriage, etc., should not be performed without the sacrificial offering (*Hómam*).
54. Brahmans should not give blessings to each other.
55. Brahmans should not bow down to another.

Namaskárams or making obeisance to elders and *Anugrahams* or blessings in return are very common in the East Coast.

56. Cows should not be killed in sacrifices.
57. Do not cause distraction by observing the religious rites of Siva by some and those of Vishnu by others.

Sectarian controversies in regard to Siva and Vishnu are strictly prohibited. The people of Kerala are to hold both in equal veneration. In fact, the mission of Sankara Achariyar was to establish Hinduism on a non-sectarian basis.

58. Brahmans should wear only one thread (irrespective of their civil condition).
59. The eldest son alone should marry.
60. Ceremony in honour of a deceased ancestor should be performed with boiled rice.
61. Kshatriyas and other castemen should perform funeral ceremonies to their maternal uncles.
62. The right of inheritance among Kshatriyas, etc., devolves on nephews.
63. Widows should lead the life of *Sanyásis* (strict celibacy).
64. Sati should be avoided.

The law giver of Malabar has made a clear advance upon the customs of the original countries, which, at the time of the colonization of Kerala, permitted Sati.

When a Nambuthiri having his wife and children is about to die, a few gifts of cows or some money as equivalent are made to the Brahmans. When he is at the point of death, his body is removed with his head towards the south to a cushion of *Kusa* grass on the floor of the *Thekkini* or southern hall, which is purified with cow-dung. Some river sand or earth around a *Thulasi* plant is scattered

Funeral Customs.

on the floor. Some more gifts (*Yátradañam*), i. e., gifts to help the spirit of the deceased in the journey to the other world, are also made at the time. Verses of the *Rig veda* are whispered into his ears, while divine names are also recited in his presence. When he is dead, the limbs are straightened, and the body is placed on three pieces of the bark of a plantain tree. The *Adiyárs* or the servants of the family make ready the fuel and other things necessary for the cremation.

Meanwhile the sons of the deceased bathe, and dressed in the *tatoo* form return home, wash their feet and put on the *Kusa* ring. The eldest son, who is the chief mourner, and his younger brothers must take part in the ceremony with the recital of holy *mantrams*. If any of the brothers happen to be a child, another grown up member touching him, must recite them. The chief mourner sprinkles some water on the dead body, and with a knife touches every joint from head to foot. Putting the knife aside, he washes his hands and sprinkles some more water on it. The body of the deceased is then well washed with water mixed with well ground green turmeric and another root. It is then dressed in new garments, and marks of *Gopichandanam* and sandal are put on the forehead, chest and hands. Some *tulsi* leaves are also thrown over it. The bier is made ready by the *Cheetiyan* (*maran*), and the dead body is placed on it and carried on the shoulders of the sons to the cremation ground which is generally in the southern part of the compound, where it is placed near the western side of the pyre. The sons then untie their tuft of hair, remove the *kusa* ring and wash their feet. Putting on the *kusa* ring again and washing their feet they prepare a *hómam* with the fire from his *Aupásana* as directed by the priest, and some *ágnya* (ghee) oblations are made with the recital of the text. The pyre which is made with the branches of the mango tree is also consecrated by the recital of holy *mantrams*, and the mourners all go round it, repeating *mantrams* dictated by the priest. The dead body is placed on it with the head towards the south, and the sacred fire already prepared is placed on the chest of the deceased in three places. As the fire burns brightly, bundles of *kusa* grass, sandal wood and ghee, are also added to the flames. While the dead body is burned and reduced to ashes, the wife of the deceased is asked to bathe, and as she is about to plunge in water, she unties her tali

(marriage-badge) and gives two of them along with two bangles to be thrown into the fire. She returns home after her bath, sits or lies down on the floor, mourning for the loss of her husband.

Vedic texts are recited while the body is burning. Meanwhile the chief mourner, carrying a pot of water on his left shoulder and accompanied by his brothers, goes three times round the pyre, letting water leak out by making holes in the pot; and on completing the third round throws it backwards into the fire. Having the brothers in front of him, he returns (without turning back) to the courtyard where they go round the servants and their implements; and then prostrate towards the east. They then perform *Udakakriya* (libation of water), and return home after bathing, and fast for the night. Next morning they bathe, and after their usual *Sandhya* service they sit on planks in front of which there is a lighted lamp, and they all get shaved. Touching paddy and a piece of gold, they bathe and perform four libations of water, two for the day and two for the day previous.

The chief mourner, who has touched paddy and gold, is also required to keep a knife with him till the twelfth day. Every day the sons bathe early in the morning, perform the morning service (*Sandhya Vandanam*) and, dressed in the *tatoo* fashion, individually perform two libations of water, after which they again bathe and go home.

The next item of the ceremony is the *Patta-nātukal*, or planting a palmyra leaf two feet in length. It is left sticking up in the south-eastern part of the yard (*mittam*) within the quadrangular edifice. The sons first adore it, offering some *tulsi* leaves and sandal paste. After purifying a portion of the floor with cowdung and laying on it three blades of *kusa* grass and worshipping it with the offering of water and flowers, two *pindams* (rice balls) placed on a plantain leaf with gingelly seeds thrown on them are given to the spirit of the departed, which is believed to be present there. All of them prostrate before the leaf; a portion of it is given to the crows, while the remaining portion is thrown into the water. Thus the libations of water and the rice ball offering to the departed spirit are continued for all the ten days. *Sanchayanam*, or the collection of the bones, falls on the fourth day, when the sons of the deceased and the priest

go to the cremation ground, and the eldest son, while the others are touching him, sprinkle a mixture of milk and water and collect the bones, which are then put in a pot to be buried underneath a tree. A pit is dug and the ashes are collected and buried in it. After this they bathe and return home.

Fifth day after cremation, Tuesday, Friday and the day of asterism of the birth of the eldest son are all avoided for this purpose.

On the 10th day, after the performance of *Udakakriya* and offering of rice balls, the palmyra leaf is removed after due adoration. All the members of the family wear *mattu* brought by the washerman and after a while change it with a sprinkling of water. The house is swept clean and purified with cowdung. The members then bathe and take their meals.

On the morning of the eleventh day, after the usual morning service and adoration of Ganapathy, the chief mourner makes the gift of a cow to a Brahman for the benefit of the departed spirit and remunerates the priest and other Brahmans who have helped him in the performance of the ceremonies during the previous days. A *Srádha* (*ekódhishtam*) is also performed, and for which a Brahman is fed, and dismissed with presents of cloth and money. The wife and sons of the deceased offer *pindams* individually and perform *Udakakriya* by the side of a river. They return home after a bath, and everyone of them takes a dose of *Punyáham* (water sanctified by holy mantrams by five Brahmans). Henceforth they become free from pollution. From the twelfth day for the whole year the chief mourner bathes early every morning, performs his religious routine, feeds a Brahman, giving him a few annas, after which he offers *pindams* to the departed spirit. This is called *Nitya Srádham*, and a similar one at the expiry of every month is also celebrated. At the end of the year, i. e., 360 days, *Sapındakarana* *Sradha* is performed, when also similar formalities are gone through. The spirit of the deceased is then supposed to enter the world of the *Pitris*. The son during the year under reference is in *Diksha*, and has to lead a life of abstinence including such very minute observances as sleeping on the floor and his wife also doing the same along with him. He is forbidden to use tobacco, betel and nuts, to get himself shaved, or to have any kind of luxury during this period. The wife of the deceased is also under a similar vow. Even

during the ten days after death, there are some restrictions which they have to follow. The brothers cannot freely touch and talk with one another. They should avoid lying on bed, oil bath, chewing betel, ghee, milk, salt, two meals a day, and sexual intercourse. All the holy *mantrams* for the daily religious ceremonies and those before taking food alone may be repeated.

If a baby dies within the first ten days after its birth, the maid servants may bury the dead body. If on the 11th day, the dead body is handed over to the earth, *i. e.*, a member of the family buries it, and becomes pure by a bath and taking a dose of sanctified water. This method of burial is resorted to, till a child is two years of age, but this is by some held to be objectionable, while the others urge the necessity of burning the dead body in a way more or less similar to that already described. The chief mourner should perform the libations of water and offer *pindam* to the departed spirit for the ten days, and be under a *Diksha* either for 41 days or for a year.

If a woman during the menses, pollution or after delivery dies, the regular funeral obsequies cannot be performed without purifying the dead body, for which several methods are prescribed. Some are of opinion that the corpse must be well washed and bathed in a tank. In the event of the pollution belonging to it being over, a *mattu*, *i. e.*, the washed cloth of the washerman may be enough. In some cases purification depends upon the gravity of the pollution or impurity. In extreme cases, a Brahman after bath should dress it in a *mattu* and sprinkle some water on it. He should then bathe and approach it and repeat the same process a number of times, when it becomes fit for funeral ceremonies. The Brahman finally becomes pure after a bath and taking a dose of the sanctified water already described. There is also another method. A bundle of *Kusa* grass is well threshed, and in the liquid obtained from it, a little of earth from an ant-hill, cowdung, cow's urine and holy ashes, are added and the mixture gently heated. If a few drops of this mixture be sprinkled with the recital of holy texts, the corpse may be set free from impurities. Then the usual funeral ceremonies may be commenced.

In the case of women who die during pregnancy, elaborate rules are laid down for cremation. They are omitted for want of space.

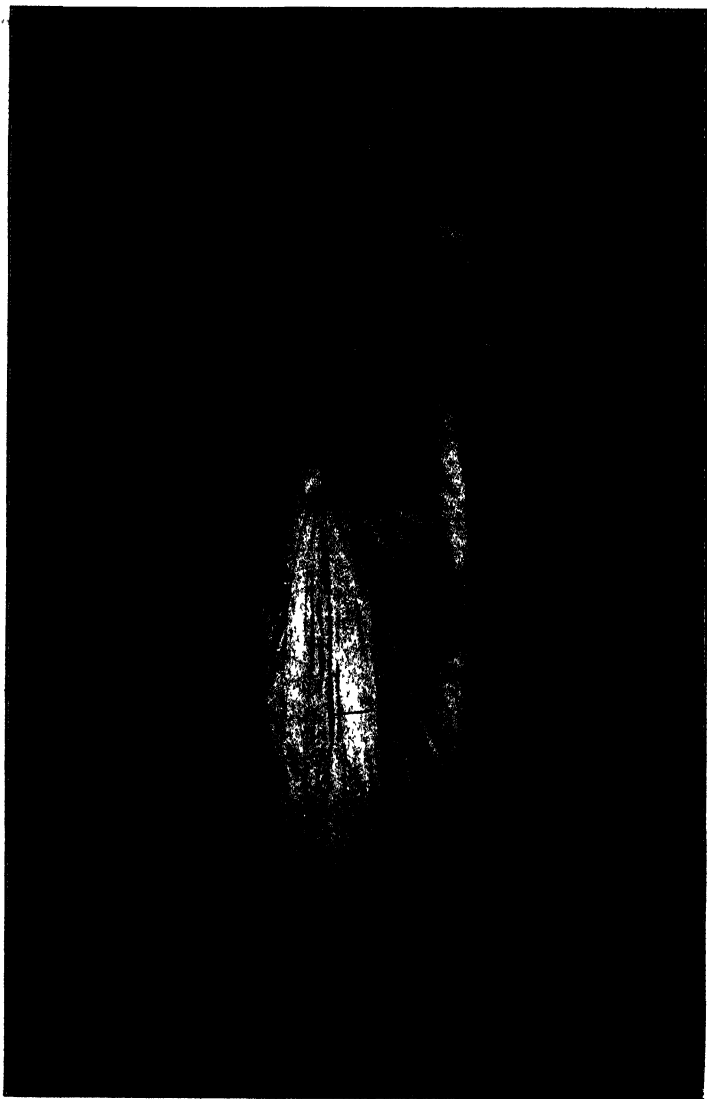
The funeral ceremonies in vedic times, according to Aswalayana Grihya Sutras and Yagnavalkya, appear to have been much simpler, but at present the performance of these ceremonies is in accordance with Garuda Purana, which is said to be a comparatively modern work. The common belief is, that when a man is dead, the two messengers of Yama, king of justice, wait near at hand, and appear before the released spirit, which is said to be of the size of a thumb (*Angushtha mātṛa*). They bind the spirit and convey it to Yama's abode, where it meets with the recorder of his actions, Chitragupta, whose business it is to note down the good and evil deeds of every person born in this world with the resulting merit (*punya*) and demerit (*pāpa*). According to the balance on the side of merit or demerit is the judgment pronounced on its future career.

The disembodied spirit at this stage can neither enjoy Heaven nor suffer the pains of Hell, until it is invested with a kind of physical body composed of gross though ethereal particles. It is then instantly hurried back to the ground of cremation (*śmaśāna*) and by feeding on the rice-ball offerings (*pindas*) and the libations of water which the sons of the deceased offer for ten consecutive days, it acquires a material body of the necessary sensibility. Thus on the tenth day it acquires an intermediate body which is sufficiently formed to possess the sensation of hunger and thirst, and on the next two days it feeds voraciously and gains sufficient strength for journey to the future abode which may be Heaven or Hell. In the latter case it requires the nourishing food to pass the terrible ordeal awaiting it.

The road by which Yama's two messengers force the spirit of a wicked man to descend to the regions of torment is described in the first two chapters of Garuda Purana. The distance to Yama's abode is said to be 86,000 leagues or *Yojanas*. The condemned spirit with the newly acquired body is made to travel at the rate of 200 leagues a day, "finds no shady trees, no resting place, no food, no water". At one time it is exposed to the burning heat equal to that of 'ten Meridian Suns', at another it is pierced by icy cold winds. At one time its tender frame is pierced by thorns, at another it is attacked by lions, tigers, savage dogs, venomous serpents and scorpions. The spirit of the deceased is thus subject to countless sufferings and torments both in its journey to and in Hell for the sins or

bad deeds on earth. To secure immunity from future punishment and make the passage of the departed spirit peaceful and pleasant, the various ceremonies already described are performed; Vedic texts, *Taraka mantrams*, are whispered in his ears at the dying moments, and divine names (*Vishnu Sahasranamam*) are recited in his presence. *Yatradanams*,—gifts of cows, light, shoes, umbrellas, water, etc.,—are made in order that their shades may serve him in his journey to Hell. Thus by the performance of many elaborate ceremonies, the sufferings and torments of the spirits are believed to be not only much mitigated but also is its career in the world of *pitris* made much happier. The spirit of the just, and those who have done good deeds on earth are invested with celestial lustre, moved by gentle breeze or carried in Heavenly cars to the world of *Pitris* (*Pitri Loka*), where they are adored as Gods, whose aid is sought at the commencement of every auspicious ceremony in a Nambuthiri family.

A Nambuthiri has to perform the *Sradha* ceremony for his father who is dead; for his paternal grand father and grandmother; for his mother after death, her father, and mother, and his paternal uncles. He has to perform the ceremony for his brother or brothers that are dead. Women have to perform the same ceremony for their parents and husbands. On the new moon days also the ceremony in a simpler form is performed by the senior member of the family. It is done either with a gift of a few annas or with feeding a Brahman along with money gifts and the recital of holy texts. For those who have died unnatural deaths a different course of ceremony called *Narayana Beli* is prescribed along with the performance of the annual *Srádha*; but there is no pollution, no *Diksha*, nor need the libation of water be performed. Thus in the *Srádha* ceremonies, the following relatives, (1) Father, father's father, and father's mother; mother, mother's father and mother's mother; father's brothers; mother's brothers, are supposed to partake of the offerings. In fact, they form a corporate body bound together by a right of participation in the offerings, and these participators are called the *Sapindas* and *Samánodakas*. Practically, however, this relationship extends only to three generations on each side, and in this way a kind of family chain consisting of seven links is formed with the father, grand father, and great



A NAMBUTHIRI IN DIKSHA (VOW).

grand father, on one side, and to son, grandson and great grandson on the other (Manu V. 60). The first three are believed to depend on the living pater-families for their well-being, and after his death, he also becomes a similar dependent on the three succeeding generations.

Propitiation and gratification of the manes by Sradha and other ceremonies are acts producing reflex benefits to the performer, and tend to bring on prosperity to himself and to his family.

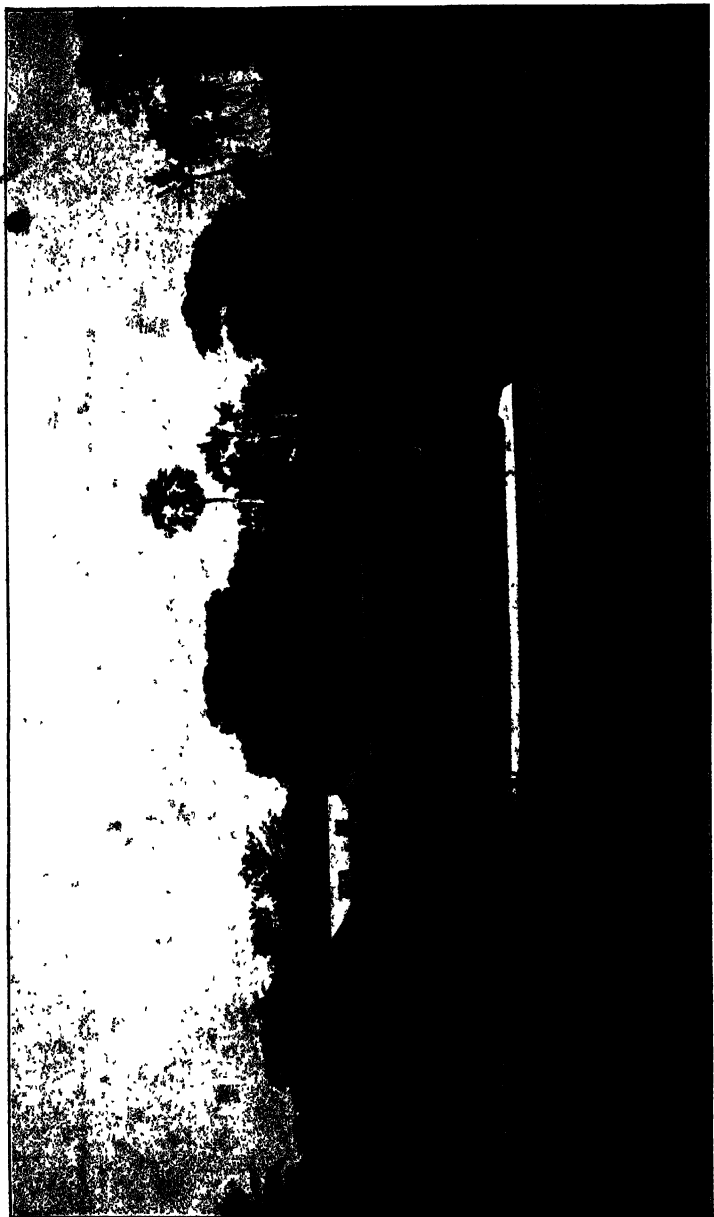
Closely connected with the caste system are the rigid theories of pollution, which may be classed under two heads, namely, pollution by approach and that by touch. Mention has already been made in the treatment of the low castes in the first volume about the recognised scale of distances at which members of each of the polluting castes must stand from a man of the higher caste or his house, the distance increasing in proportion to the low status of the caste. There are also castes low in the social scale mutually conveying pollution. Besides the two kinds of pollutions mentioned above, there is also what is called ceremonial pollution, which also may be either the one or the other. A person ceremonially polluted conveys pollution to even members of the same caste. Women are regarded as ceremonially polluted during their monthly periods and after delivery; and they convey this as a kind of atmospheric pollution. They have to live in seclusion during this period. Their purification, which cannot be said to take place until after a certain number of days, has to be performed sometimes by members of a specific caste other than their own.

A death or birth in a family entails pollution on all the agnates and cognates. In the case of the Nambuthiris and other Brahmans this lasts for ten days, and has to be removed by a bath and certain prescribed ceremonies. The functions of the barber and washerman are also important in this connection. These pollutions sometimes, vary according to the closeness of consanguinity. All Śapindas, i. e., those connected by the same cake or pindas have ten days' pollution in both the cases; but the male descendants of a father and grandfather and girls before marriage have the same pollution by birth. All *Sôdakans* (those to whom mere libations of water are offered)

of three degrees of consanguinity from the seventh have pollution for three days only. If an agnate of the seventh degree of consanguinity happen to have a son, another member of the agnates of the seventh degree may have only three days' pollution, if the latter would tell the child that he would like to have only three days' pollution thereafter. The descendants of a mother and grandmother (mother's mother and father's mother) have only three days' pollution in the case of a birth or death among themselves. If they happen to be either *Sapindas* or *Samanódakas*, they will have ten days' pollution. In the case of women the pollution will be that which affects their husband but will not be binding on their children. When the members of a family are under a death pollution and when they are again polluted by birth, the second pollution may be removed by purification from the first.

Even at a remote period the political and social organizations of the Nambuthiris were highly developed; and it is said that Brahmans were originally grouped in villages or *Gramams*, and that the affairs of the groups were under the management of the headmen or leaders of *Grámams* (*Grámani*). The groups of villages were placed under chieftains known as *Taliyatiris* who were generally nominated for three years by special electors from the sixty-four villages into which Kerala was divided. There was a general theocratic council for the whole country which became a political and social institution, subordinate to which there were minor assemblies. Grand meetings consisting of the *Taliyatiris*, the elders of the community and the people in general, were held at Tirunavai during the Mahá makham festival and afterwards at Thrikanamathilakam at which all important political and social matters affecting the welfare of the community were discussed and settled. The meeting at the latter place continued throughout the reigns of the Perumals; but after the dissolution of the kingdom of Kerala into various independent principalities their political organization gradually began to decline. They confined their attention chiefly to religious and social matters in the villages in which they had settled.

The principal villages in the State were Perumanam, Irinjalakuda and Chovaram in the adjacent British territory, and these had richly endowed institutions for the study of the



TRICHUR VEDIC COLLEGE (BRAHMASWAM MATAM)

Srautha Karmas, (rites according to the *Srutis*) and for helping, by money gifts, those who performed them. These institutions were called *Sabhdmadhams* and the study of the subjects had long ago ceased to exist, but the income of these institutions is utilized in giving a kind of allowance to those who have performed *Yágams* or sacrifices and other Vedic rites, and also for the expenses of the temples attached to them. The properties which are mostly landed, are managed by four individuals appointed by the *Karmis*, who meet once a year, go over the accounts and share among themselves the net proceeds and also admit new members who perform similar rites into their *Yógam* or society. It is curious to note that these institutions are mostly in the Pálghat Táluk, which is said to have been, in ancient times, an important Nambuthiri centre, though not a vestige of their residence is anywhere to be seen now except the landed estates of some of the landlords and a few temples under their management. There were similar institutions in Malabar and Travancore attached to their villages.

Besides the institutions above referred to there were other similar institutions *Sástra Sabhamadham* at Kumbalam and Agathiyur for the study of Grammar, Mímámsa and Vedánta, both of which do not now find favour with the Nambuthiri youths as only very few attend them.

The division of the Nambuthiris into eight classes already described is based, to some extent, on their occupation. The Nambuthiris were, according to tradition, brought to Kerala as colonists to people the country ; and Parasurama, their patron sage, found separate occupations for the various classes into which the community was divided. To some Brahman families were assigned the learned professions and the privilege of making sacrifices, to others the profession of medicine, sorcery, and magic, to a third astrology and astronomy, to a fourth the duty of performing *pújas* in temples and so on. While some had the Government of the land, others were armed to protect the country from foreign incursions and internecine quarrels. There were also others who were endowed with special spiritual functions. But these exclusive divisions, which were strictly maintained till recently, are now beginning to lose recognition. The *Grámaní* adhyans were held in a somewhat low estimation by other Nambuthiris,

because they had exercised territorial sovereignty, and were therefore held not competent to study the *Vedas*. Among the highest class of Vedic Nambuthiris, the Rajas of Chembakasseri Ambalapuzha or Porakad, Edapilly and Parúr were the chief territorial magnates. Really the profession of arms did not disqualify any Brahman from the study of the *Vedas* nor, detract them from their sanctimonious character. The Edapilly chief was the foremost who accepted arms from Parasurama, and was, so late as the Portuguese period, known to be fighting, by espousing the cause of the Zamorin and leading his land forces in the fight at the ford of Kumbalam. Barbosa tells us that 'the kings make great use of these Brahmans for many things except in deeds of arms.'

It must be remembered that Parasurama was himself a Brahman of the militant type, having fought with and destroyed the Kshatriya race thrice seven times over. The study of the *Vedas* and practice of the religious austerities were not in Malabar incompatible with the profession of arms, and this is testified by the fact that the instructors in arms of both Cochin and Travancore Rajas are the Brahmans of the *Vedic* class, and these enjoy to the present day the emoluments and privileges attached to that office though all the Rajas have left off the study of the use of them. In Cochin, the office is hereditary in the family of Peráttupurathu Nambuthiri, who is officially styled Perattupurathu Panikkar. In Travancore, the office is held by Kalamthattil Kurukal. It is said that in former times every 'Perámpatta Panikkar' had to vindicate his title to the office by having an open sword in hand, with a royal tiger, and if he succeeds in killing the animal he plants, in token of victory, a post in the inner court-yard of the Illam. It would appear that some of these posts are still to be seen standing in the yard.

There can be no doubt that the Nambuthiris associated themselves with the Government of the country even after they had ceased to have any direct control under the early theocratic system that prevailed in Malabar. They were the ministers of the Rajas, their judges, their generals in the field, and above all, their spiritual preceptors. It was, 'the king's Brahman and high priest', who received Vasco da Gama at the palace gates and conducted him to the king's presence at the Portuguese Admiral's first interview with the Zamorin. We have the

assurance of Barbosa that there is no more boast, for he tells us that the kings used to employ these Brahmans as messengers and ambassadors to go from kingdom to kingdom because they pass in safety in all parts without any one molesting them, even though the kings may be at war. Till but recently we have had Nambuthiri-Sarvadhikaryakars (Prime-ministers), Káryakkárs, (Governors) Judges, and Munsifs in Travancore and Cochin. Fifty years ago the highest courts of both these States were presided over by Nambuthiri Judges. But at present, in the public service, the Nambuthiri is nowhere. The Nambuthiris form the landed aristocracy of the country and claim the lands in *Jammam* or birth-right, tracing their title to an alleged original gift by Parasurama.

Those who are landlords do not cultivate the lands themselves, but let them out to tenants, mostly Nayars, on various tenures. It is seldom that they earn their livelihood, by personal exertion. They are such a favoured class that from the king downwards to the lowest peasant everyone would forego even his necessity to pander to their luxury. Instead of scorning delights and living laborious days as ordained by Sankara Smriti they make their utmost endeavour by deed and word to impress on others the idea that all excellences in the world are their birth-right and that whatever is low and mean is the portion of the lower orders. In fact, it is the Nambuthiris, of all Brahmans in India, who strictly follow the injunctions of Manu, "Never serve".

It is only the poorest of them who will consent to act as priests in temples. In some temples the priesthood is hereditary in certain families, and the priest, for the time being, has to confine himself to certain prescribed limits and lead a celibate life. Perhaps it is for his special sacredness, which is co-relative with his high position, that the priest of the temple Badaryásrama in North India, and also the priest of Siva temple at Tirivattur near Madras, is always a Nambuthiri.

The present economic condition is thus well described in Travancore Census Report (1901)—"As the pre-historic heirs to the entire land of Kerala, the Nambuthiris live on agriculture. But efficiency in an adaptation to changing environments operates as a severe handicap in the race'. The difficulties incidental to an effect of land division have contributed to

making the Nambuthiris 'a litigious population and the ruinous scale of expenditure necessary for the disposal of girls, be it of the most plebeian kind, has brought their general prosperity to a very low level'.

Thus the Nambuthiris do not adapt themselves to any of the requirements of modern days. Having left off their old ideals, they have not been entering into any of the pursuits which are thrown open to them in these days. As matters now stand, the traditional hospitality of the Hindu kings of Malabar which, fortunately for them, has not relaxed, is the only sustenance and support of the ordinary Nambuthiri Brahman.

Fortunately in the State, there is one aristocratic Vedic family the members of which, maintaining the religious life, are following trade, and are the proprietors of a tile factory. They had at one time invested a few lakhs of rupees in the construction of a cotton mill at Calicut and still have many shares in that Joint Stock Company. They are besides traders in other articles. One young member of that family is the editor of a popular monthly. Their example may well be followed by others of the caste who are not wanting in the necessary capital. The members of the non-vedic class, on the other hand, are more enterprising and some of them are gentlemen farmers and traders. Their children are reading in schools.

The Nambuthiris have been occupying and still occupy, in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, the highest position in the order of social precedence; and are looked upon by the Nayars and the members of the lower castes as the 'holiest of human beings.' Many among them are landlords, and their tenant, peaceful and contented owing to their unexact nature, pay their homage and customary dues generation after generation. They consider them not merely as landlords and benefactors, but even revere them as Gods on earth (*Bhudévars*). "Their persons are 'holy' their movements 'processions' and their meal 'nectar' ". Their low-born tenants and others of the lower castes dare not approach them within the polluting distance, nor see what passes within their sacred precincts. In fact they have long been and are even now very submissive and obedient to the members of this priestly class.

It will not be out of place, in this connection, to mention

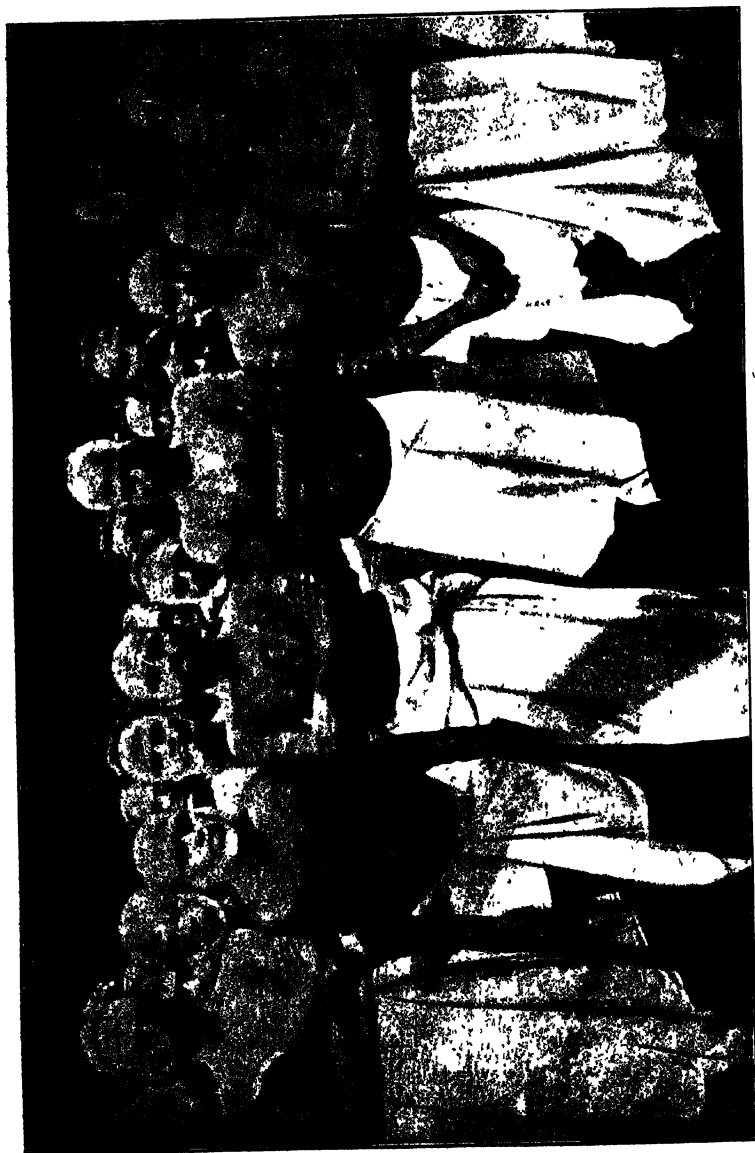
a few instances of the nature of the conversation between one Nambuthiri and another and that between a Nambuthiri and a Nayar or other low-caste member. In the former case only the vernacular is used in the ordinary way; while in the latter, the superiority of the Nambuthiri should be shown at every turn. Thus a Nayar addressing a Nambuthiri, must speak of himself as *Atiyān* (foot-servant), his rice is called 'gritti rice or *Kallāri*, his rupees, copper coins or *Chembu-Kāsu*, his house as *Kuppadu* (dung-pit). He must esteem himself very low as he proceeds, lest the least sign of insubordination should provoke and ruin him. He must speak of the Nambuthiri's rice as *Pazhayari* old or raw rice, his coppers as rupees, and his house as *Illam* or *Mana*. The Nayar must not call his cloth a cloth but 'an old cloth or spider's web.' The Nambuthiri's cloth, on the other hand, is called his daily white cloth or his superior cloth (*Vastram*). The Nayar while referring to his bathing must say, that he drenches himself in water (*nanayuka*—to become wet), but the Nambuthiri, on a similar occasion is said to sport in the water (*Nīratuka*). Should he speak of eating or drinking, the Nayar must say of himself that he takes food or treats himself to the water (*karikkādi*) in which the rice has been washed. Should he refer to the food of the Nambuthiri, he must say that he tastes ambrosia (*Amritham*). A Nayar calls his sleeping 'lying flat', while the Nambuthiri, is said to close his eyes or resting (went to *Pallikuruppu*) like a Raja. The Nayar must speak of his own death as *kuttam pizhachu* or died of sins, but of the Nambuthiri as *mutinnu ezhunnelli* (disappeared for ever). When the Nayar is ill, he says that his limbs have become stiff, but a Nambuthiri in a similar state, is said to be merely unwell. When a Nambuthiri has to be shaved by a barber, the expression that his 'hairs are cut,' is invariably used. When he is angry he is said to be dissatisfied. A Nayar cleans his teeth, but a Nambuthiri cleans his superior pearls. When he laughs, he displays his superior pearls. Such is the Euphuistic language used by the Nayars and other low caste men in addressing the Nambuthiris.

The Nambuthiris are generally very handsome and their complexion is of various shades. Their average height is 162 centimetres. They are mostly well nourished and rotund; and among them lean people are seldom found.

Appear-
ance.

Excepting the Muhamadans, the Nambuthiris are perhaps the hairiest. The hair on the head is plentiful, glossy and wavy; and is allowed to grow in the form of an oval patch from the vertex or slightly behind it to a little on the back from the forehead. The tuft of hair or the *kudumi* is tied into a knot hanging over the forehead or at one side according to the fancy of the wearer and sometimes it is so done as to spread over the head. The rest of the head and the face and, in fact, the whole body excepting the back are periodically shaved. Gingelly oil (*enna*) is used to keep the hair smooth and make it grow long. This is the orthodox fashion in Malabar, though exceptions are sometimes found. But, when a Nambuthiri's wife is pregnant or when he is the chief mourner in his family, he refrains from the barber for a year. This custom of having an oval patch, it is said, originated from an ordinance of Parasurama who had the tuft of the first colonists changed to the front for a national purpose. There is still a saying in Malabar "*Purvasikha paradésathu nishidham*," meaning 'the tuft of hair on the top of the head is forbidden in *Paradesa* (East Coast)'. The Nambuthiris grow their finger nails sometimes, very long. After bath, they wear on their forehead the horizontal Sivite mark '*tripundram*' with *bhasmam* or ashes, and the vertical Vaishnavite mark with *gópichandanam*. It has been remarked of the Nambuthiris' general appearance that there is about his good old person and his quaint looking dress and jewellery, a *sútric* (mild and guileless) beauty which the eye delights to dwell on.

The Nambuthiri lady is generally very fair and handsome. Being strictly *gôsha*, the women shut themselves up inside their houses and seldom move about except on extreme urgency. They then shelter themselves behind broad round cadjan umbrellas specially made for the purpose, which are turned against the passers-by and from behind whose cover they cast their sparkling eyes beyond to have a look at the passing stranger. They have long and glossy hair which is parted at the crown and drawn tight to the ears with a knot at the back. After bath, they put on three horizontal lines on their foreheads with sandal paste. The Adhyan woman puts these on in a crescent-like form. They apply also eye-salves which extend as dark lines up to the ear on either side.



A GROUP OF NAMBUTHIRIS

The Nambuthiris have little or no time for ~~games~~ or recreations after their daily religious routine.

Games.

The *Yátrakali*, which is their great national amusement, is somewhat like a dramatic performance in which even the enlightened Nambuthiris take part. It is a socio-religious performance which has received no improvement in any of its details

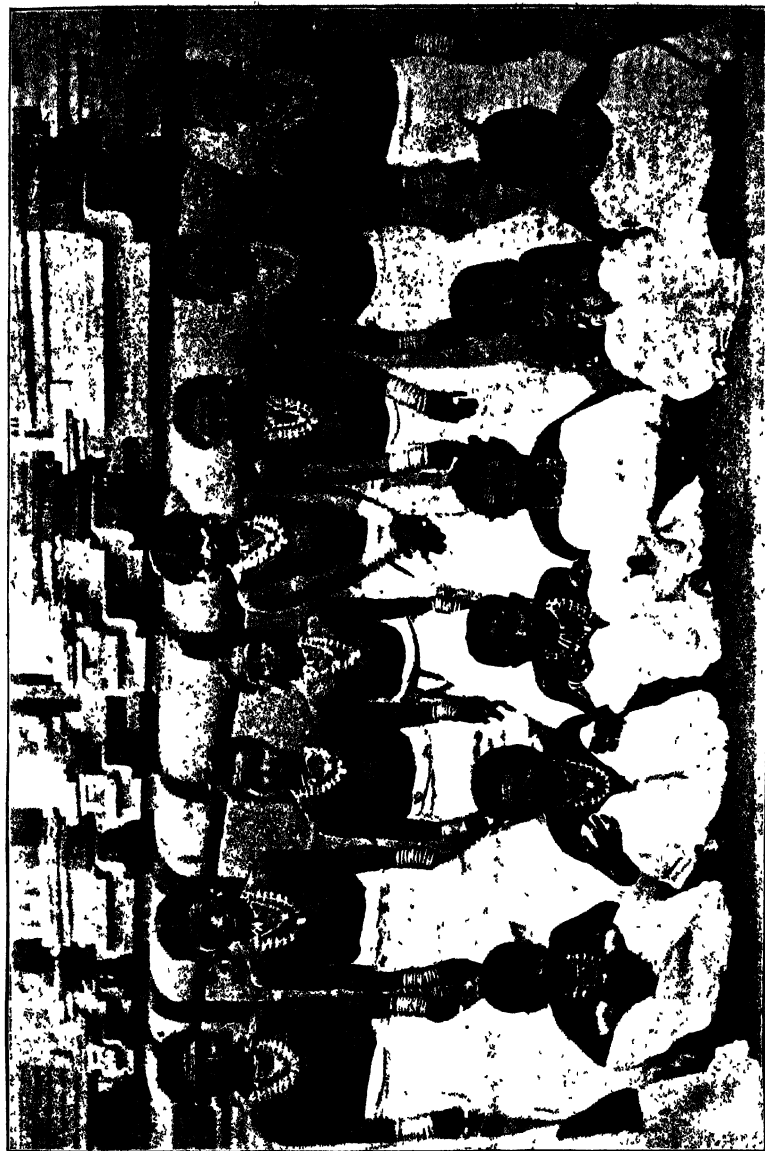
Everything with the Nambuthiri is hoary with age. The young men amuse themselves with the foot-ball at certain seasons with the *Kottiyum Kólum*, *Chélakali*, or *Kalāchikali* (playing with marbles). The fashionable and the less religious people play at chess, cards or dice or the one known as *káttam* (*Kambithayam*). Most of them have a liking for *Kathakali* or the national dramatic performance. The *Thiruváthirakali* is the favourite pastime of their women. This is a very pretty circular dance in which a very large number of Nambuthiri women except widows take part. The Ambalavási and Sudra women also sing and dance with them either in the *Nalukettu* (quadrangular edifice) or in the open air in the spacious yards of their houses, but quite protected from the public gaze by out houses and the walls of the compound. The dance is accompanied by songs of different kinds known as *Pathinaluvritham*, *Panas* and *Kirthanams*, all recitals of the stories of the heroic actions of the gods mentioned in the *Puranas*. This is largely indulged in on the *Thiruvathira* and *Onam* days in the month of Dhanu (December-January) and Chingam (August-September). There are also other games, namely, *Parakali*, *Vattakali*, *Ammama* and *Uzhinhal* or swing in which they at times take part; and these are their only exercises they have in addition to their daily domestic duties. Music is never cultivated as an art by the Nambuthiri women, and what little they know is due to their close intimacy with the Nayar women whose accomplishments are of course of a higher order.

The Nambuthiris are very sparing in their clothing, and do not seem to feel the shame of walking about almost naked, a habit which is not countenanced by the *Snrithi* which they profess to follow. The men wear an under garment (*koupinam*), which is a strip of cloth, passing between the thighs, the ends being attached to a string round the loins both at the back and at the front. They are strict *Swadéshis* and would not, on any account, go in for

Dress.

Manchester piecegoods, which are *taboos* to them. They wear round their loins, stretching a little below the knee, a cloth of local manufacture, four or five cubits in length, two and a half or three cubits in breadth, with a coloured border or sometimes laced at the edges. They do not use silk or coloured cloth of any kind or plain white cloth without a border. It is considered very fashionable or dignifying to wear it rather higher than the loins, that is, about the pit of the stomach. A second small cloth (*thóorthumundu*) is worn over the shoulders and the chest. At home or in a temple close by, when he is at prayers, he is almost naked, either covered by a small loin cloth or only with a *koupinam*, which is a repulsive sight to others. In this he is a marked contrast to the Tamil Brahmans of the east coast, who are neatly dressed on these occasions. Their mode of dressing on religious occasions is peculiar and is known as *Thattudukkal*, which consists of a long piece of country-made cloth tied round the loin with a portion of it passing between the thighs and 'tucked in at the front and behind, with a front portion arranged into a number of reduplications.' This mode of dressing exhibits a front covered by numerous folds hanging down from the waist to the feet, while the buttocks are almost exposed. They wear wooden sandals, but are not averse to leather ones, though they will not allow the heel of their foot to be covered up. On ordinary occasions, they dress like the Nayars. There is a tendency among the young men of these days to wear coats and caps, when they go out, and to be slightly influenced by the vices of modern civilisation.

The Nambuthiri woman, who is called *Antharjanam* or *Akathamma* i. e., one who is inside (strictly *gósha*), also dresses in a peculiar style. While the ordinary Nambuthiri woman dresses in the style called *Nerinjudukkuka*; the Adhyan lady dresses in the style known as *Okkum Koluthum Vechutukkuka*. A white cloth (for, coloured ones and silk cloths are prohibited), about ten cubits in length, is fastened round the loins, a portion of it passing between the legs, and reaching well below the knee and also covering the breast. As an adornment a gold border is allowed to the cloth. They do not wear the *Ravikka* or half-jacket, which is but a recent introduction. At home, inside the house, they do not cover the breast; but, when going out, they cover themselves up with a long piece of cloth, leaving only the head and feet exposed. One end of the cloth is



A GROUP OF NAMBUTHIRI GIRLS WITH ORNAMENTS.

so held up in the hand, which holds also the '*marakūda*' or the covering umbrella already mentioned, so as to cover the face and the body. They are accompanied by a *Dāsi* or *Vishālī* i. e., a Nayar maid servant, who walks in front and calls out to the way-farers to move out of the lady's way. The Nambuthiris insist on their women carrying about their persons as much clothing as they would persistently deny to Nayar women.

The Nambuthiri wears but few ornaments on his person.

Ornaments.

He has finger-rings made of gold and often set with precious stones, of which one pattern is considered sacred and necessary on religious occasions. This is the *Pavitram*, which is of gold and of the thickness of an ordinary finger-ring with an '8' like figure worked on it, with dots on each side of it, while the rest is either worked in lines or is plain. In lieu of this, sometimes *pavitrams* made of *darbha* grass are put on, when performing religious ceremonies. The latter is, of course, among the most orthodox. The Nambuthiris ~~bore~~ their ~~ears~~ as other Hindus do, but are prohibited from wearing ear-rings. Those, however, who have performed *Agni-ādānam* and are *Agnihotras* use ear pendants known as *Kundalams*, or less elaborate ones, *kunukkus* made of gold. They sometimes wear round their necks necklaces of *rudrāksha*, beads or *Thulsi-mani* (*Eleocarpus lanceolatus*) mounted in gold, the middle set with stones and curiously worked.

The prohibition against the use of valuable ornaments is even more strict in the case of Nambuthiri women. The Sankara Smrithi says—"She could wear on both arms only bracelets made of brass or bell-metal; but silver ones are not objectionable, and those of gold are never allowed. She could never have nose-rings, nor have her hair plaited, nor ornament her forehead with dots of beautiful pattern. The cloth round the loins should not be fastened with a girdle. She may wear an ear ornament made of gold '*Chittu*', and round her neck a string made of cotton thread with a tali hanging from it". In practice, these rules, however, are not at present very strictly observed. In North Malabar, golden bangles are for the most part used, while in South Malabar and the Cochin State, bell-metal or brass bangles, as many as twenty-one, are worn to cover the forearm. The ornaments of the Nambuthiri women

are of a kind not worn by the women of any other caste. They wear rings on the fingers; they also use yalk's tail (tail of *Krishnāmrigam*) in place of false hair. A peculiar kind of necklace called *Cheruthāli* is also worn loose over the breast, and beneath this the Adhyan women wear garlands of *manis* or gold pieces along with other jewels known as *karumalapatta* and *kazhul*. Nambuthiri widows are not allowed to wear ornaments except the *tāli*, and she is not to shave her head as among the east coast Brahmins.

The routine dietary of the Nambuthiris is simple, and consists of boiled rice which is eaten with vegetable Food. curries and pickles (*Uppilittathu*), the last course being sour butter-milk and rice. Their favourite curries are *Mulakrishyam* and *Upperi*. The former is a preparation of sliced vegetables boiled in water with salt and seasoned with coconut-oil and Karuveppila (*Bergera konigii*); while in the latter the water in which the vegetable pieces are boiled is strained and the slices themselves are fried in coconut oil. *Kālan* (a vegetable preparation in sour butter-milk seasoned with a mixture of coconut, chillies, etc.) is a curry much appreciated by them. Chopped vegetables, especially plantains, and pappadams (round wafers made of the meal of the kidney bean) fried in the coconut oil, are also in some families eaten at every meal. *Kanjee* or rice gruel with its accessories forms their favourite mid-day meal. Tea and coffee are not prescribed in their sastras, and yet some indulge in them. The Nambuthiris do not, as a rule, drink cold water, but the liquid boiled with dried ginger, cumin, and coriander seeds and sometimes with horse-gram forms their favourite beverage. They like very sour and sweet things but do not like pungent preparations.

Before partaking of meals a Nambuthiri must bathe and do *pūja* to the deity, which consists of an offering of rice to the household fire (*grihyagni*) and to the crows. His time for dinner is generally between 10 and 11 A. M. When there is no stranger, the wife serves meals to her husband; and takes charge of the leaf out of which the husband has dined, and holds it in her right hand; before rising the husband touches it with his left hand to indicate that the wife is eating in continuation and not the *Echil* (or the remains of the victuals), which are considered impure. If there are guests dining with

the Nambuthiri, the food is served by a Pattar Brahman or by a young member of the family. It is served on plantain leaves which take the place of plates.

The Nambuthiri ladies do not partake of the food cooked by Pattar Brahmans, but the male members of the *Illam* have no objection. Strictly speaking, the Nambuthiris are allowed only one rice meal a day, their supper being confined to fruits, candied cakes of wheat or rice boiled in milk with sugar and spices. *Kozhakkatta*, a bolus-like preparation of boiled rice with cocoanut scrapings put into it is their delicacy. Ghee and dholl are sparingly used. In practice, however, they take rice not less than twice a day. A widow is always confined to one meal, but this rule is not always observed.

In large feasts, however, the preparations are totally different, more elaborate and grander. Various kinds of vegetable-curries, all well prepared, various kinds of sliced vegetables fried in cocoanut-oil and seasoned with salt, pickles of all sorts, *Payasams* (sweet preparations in which they are experts) are served along with boiled rice, one after another, on large plantain leaves on the floor in special halls, in several rows, *páyasam*, butter-milk to eat with boiled rice being the last of them. The Nambuthiris sit in front of them and the consumption lasts sometimes for more than an hour. Preparations for the *Othu Oottu* (vedic feasts) and other festivals are attended to with scrupulous care, and defect in the cooking of them, or the sight of an insect in any of the vessels containing the curries, is attributed to the divine wrath consequent on their failure in the discharge of their duties. The local astrologer is then sent for and his suggestions based on astrology are accepted. The divine wrath is appeased by additional offerings on a grander scale. Tamil Brahmans are not always allowed to dine with them. Sudras should be far away and cannot be seen. Nambuthiris are generally hospitable, and feed poor Brahmans and others who go to them, sometimes for several days.

Rules for taking meals :—In the eleventh chapter of the Sankara Smrithi there are certain rules laid down regarding the taking of food by the four orders of the Nambuthiris, viz., *Brahmachari*, *Grahasathan*, *Vanaprasthan* and *Sanyasi*. The Brahmachari or the student who lives in his preceptor's house, may there take the food he likes. To him it is the purest

food equal to ambrosia. The *Grahastha* must, before he takes his meals, satisfy the hunger of the Gods, the *Pitris* (spirits of ancestors), guests, pupils, and household divinities. He can take only what is left after they are served.

The *Vanaprastha* should, as far as he possibly can, live on air. He can, at any rate, eat only the fruits and roots that grow in the forest; he should not eat anything that is ground in a mortar; he must satisfy himself with having his food ground by his teeth, that is, he should not partake of things boiled. The *Sanyāsi* can take only one meal a day; he must partake only of what he gets by begging; and water must be his only beverage. All follow the rules that are common to the *Nambuthiris*—no one should take unclean meals, and nothing should be taken within six hours of the occurrence of an eclipse of the sun or moon. Food may be taken after bath when the eclipse is fully over and the surface of the sun or moon is fully visible. If a Nambuthiri comes to know of any untoward thing having happened to a Brahman or a cow, he should desist from taking his food till he tries to do all he can to give them relief and till he has sympathised with them. He should not take meals at the moment when the king or his own relative is in grief, nor at the dead of night, nor at mid-day, nor when his previous food has not been well digested, nor at dawn, or at dusk. No food should be taken with wet clothing or when quite naked, or sitting at the window and not on the floor, or on a broken plank, or on tiptoe, or lying down, or sitting in the lap of another or from a broken vessel or the bare floor or holding the food in the bare hand without a leaf or a vessel. No salt ought to be served at meals before prayers are over. While sitting at meals children should not be abused. No one should sit by himself for meals, but an enemy, a wife, or one who by caste rules is not allowed to sit in the same line should, on any account, be allowed to sit together for meals. Rice prepared with gingelly seeds as well as curds should not be taken at night, nor milk during day-time. Food ought not to be taken before performing *hōmam* (sacrifice) or before one's parents have taken theirs. Remains and refuse of victuals ought not to be taken. Food should be taken with ghee, it should not be taken outside a house or in view of a great multitude or in an uninhabited house. The stomach should at no time be over-filled. If the food and the *acharams* are pure, the heart will be pure and God bestows grace only on an

absolutely pure heart. Otherwise, one will be cast in the darkness of hell and will have to be there.

As has been said, the various classes into which the Nambuthiris were divided in ancient times, and the functions assigned to them, now exist only in name. They have also fallen intellectually

Present social
condition of the
Nambuthiris.

from their once lofty position. In the Malabar Marriage Commission Report, it is said that, instead of taking the lead in every intellectual pursuit as do the Brahmans in other parts, the Nambuthiris have so far deteriorated that it would be difficult to find more than a few who have studied Sanskrit, which is the chief vehicle of their sacred texts. Nor are there even very few who have studied the *literature, Malayalam*, their spoken language. The two richly endowed Vedic Institutions at Trichur in the State, and at Tirunavai in South Malabar, intended for the study of Rig Veda, are not properly attended by the Nambuthiri *Brahmacharis* of all parts of Cochin, Malabar and Travancore. Nor is the discipline in them very commendable.

The old Sanskrit College (*Sabhamadham*) near Trichur is now almost deserted. Thus they no longer care for the sacred learning of their forefathers. Their Smrithi prohibits the study of English, which is the language of the *Mléshas* or the unclean. They are not advancing, nor have they any inclination to advance with the progress of modern times; and they are completely out-beaten in the race of progress by their *Adyals* (Sudras), the Nayars. The junior members are forbidden to marry in their own community and have no voice in the affairs of their families: and therefore the feeling of responsible co-operation on the part of the unmarried males does not exist or is fast dying out in their family organizations. Living in a land of charity and finding no difficulty for maintenance owing to the liberality of the rulers, chieftains and others, they find no necessity to rise above the struggle for existence which prevails in other castes. They appear to be contented with the lot in which they are cast and have no higher ambition. In this respect they are a marked contrast to the other Brahmans.

While, during every ten years, the population of every caste is steadily increasing in the State, the strength of the Nambuthiris is steadily diminishing. This is especially owing to the

marriage of a large number of their girls at an advanced age, some remaining in celibacy for a long time, and owing also to the marriage of the junior members outside their own community. The women are kept in utter ignorance.

There are some who say that the Nambuthiris are not so bad as they are represented to be and that their position is loftier than that of any other Brahmans in Southern India. It may be seen that they are the best in the land, and that their loftier position is the inheritance of ages, and dates its origin from a time when their forefathers were both spiritual and temporal rulers of Kerala. But now, there can be no doubt that they are going down, and unless they wake up and rise to the occasion they will lose their status and be forgotten.

Thus far have the customs and manners of the Nambuthiris been described. If the religion of a people serves as the basis of their moral life, then their moral life is highly dominated by it. The Nambuthiris are beyond doubt a peace-loving people entirely devoted to their religion; untouched by progress, and unspoiled by the vices of modern civilization, it will be well, if they, still continue to represent the only unalloyed vestiges of 'Vedic Brahmanism.'

Conclusion.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TAMIL BRAHMANS.

In the second division of the Dravida Brahmans who have, in former times, immigrated and settled in the Cochin State, are included the Tamil Brahmans. They are also known as Paradesis, or foreign Brahmans, as contrasted with the Nambuthiris who are considered as the Native or original Brahmans. They numbered at the Census of 1901, 16,017; 8,322 being males and 7,695 females.¹ Their first advent to the Cochin State, chiefly from the Chola and Pandiyan Kingdoms, according to an old tradition, dates back to the period subsequent to the fall of the Panniyur temple in South Malabar, and during the centuries following it. In fact, immigration and settlement have been and are still going on in small numbers. They have no permanent vested interests in the State. In all essential points they adhere to the customs of their ancestors, though in minor social matters such as dress (of the males), observances of pollution by touch and approach, etc., they have adopted the ways of the Nambuthiris. Many of them have also adopted Malayalam as their mother tongue, though mutilated Tamil is spoken at home.

All the Tamil Brahmans fall under one of the three main divisions following one of the three *Vedas*, *Rig*, *Yajus*, *Sáman*, and this threefold division is recognized only for ceremonial purposes. All the religious ceremonies are performed according to the *Grihya Sūtras* (ritual books), belonging to their *Vēda* or *Sákha*. Of these, there are eight kinds now in vogue. Thus the Brahmans claim descent from one or more of the Rishis—*Athri*, *Bhrigu*, *Kuthsya*, *Vasishtha*, *Gauthama*, *Kásyapa* and *Angiras*; according some are given the names of the following Rishis—*Agasthya*, *Angiras*, *Athri*, *Bhrigu*, *Kásyapa*, *Vasishta* and *Gauthama*.

Internal
structure of
the caste.

These are said to have eighteen *Ganams*, and for each *Ganam* there are a number of *Gotras* in all numbering about 230.¹

Each *Rishi* adopted one or other of the three *Védas* or *Sakhás*, and each *Síkha* was again sub-divided into one or more *Grihya Sūtras* or schools. Thus we have for the *Aswaláyana* for the *Rig Vēda*, *Bodháyana*, *Bháradvaja*, *Vaighánasa*, *Sathyáshada*, *Apāsthamba*, for the *Black Yajur Vēda*, *Kāthya-yana* for the *White Yajur Vēda*, *Dráhyayana* for *Sáma Vēda*.

Besides these sub-divisions there are also others which are based on the localities in which they have originally settled in groups. The *Tamil Brahmins* are divided into the following sections:—I. *Smārthas* and II. *Vaishnavás*; and the former are again divided into (1) *Vadaman*, (2) *Brahacharanam*, (3) *Vadhyaman* or *Madhyaman*, (4) *Ashta Sahasram* and (5) *Kanial*. The members of these divisions are found all over the State.

(1) *Vadaman*.—The *Vadamans* claim to be superior to the other classes, but make no objection to dine with all the sections except *Gurukals* in some places. The important sub-divisions among the *Vadamans* are *Vada Désathu Vadamans*, (*Vadamans* from the northern country) and 2. *Chola Désathu Vadamans* (*Vadamans* from the *Chola* kingdom). The former are held by some to be superior to others in status. The members of the two sub-divisions are pure *Smārthas*, who use, as their sect mark, either the *úrdhwa pundram*—straight mark by sandal paste—or the circular mark, but rarely the cross lines. They worship both *Siva* and *Vishnu* with equal reverence, and read the *Puranas* about *Vishnu* and his incarnations. Some *Vadamans* use the *Vaishnavite* names, but follow the *Smārtha* customs in every way. There is a proverb—*Vadaman Moothu Vaishnavan* (*Vadaman* ripens into a *Vaishnavan*). The *Sri Vaishnavans* are really *Vadamans* recently converted into *Vaishnavaism*.

(2) *Brahacharanam*.—The members of this sect are more *Sivite* and orthodox than the *Vadamans*. They put on *Vibhúthi*—sacred ashes and sandal paste—horizontal lines as their sect mark. The very orthodox among these people wear a single *Rudráksha* bead or necklace of beads, and some make *Sivalingams* out of these beads, which they put on the head during worship. Very seldom are such persons seen in this State. There are nine sub-divisions in this sect, of which the *Mankudi*, and *Sathysmangalam*, are the most important.

(3) *Vādhyaman* or *Madhyaman*.—"The members of this class are said to be more hardworking, generous, and fair the better for their poverty".¹ They are also said to be clanish.

(4) *Ashta Sahasram*.—The members of this division are considered to be inferior to the *Brahacharanams* and *Vadamans*; but in religion they are more Sivites.²

(6) *Kanials* or *Kaniydars*.—They form a separate class of *Smartha Brahmins*.

There are no Vaishnavites in the State except a few individuals who are officials, and they are therefore omitted in this account.

These divisions were based, originally upon territorial groups, and the members of them might be found to belong to the same *Vēda*, *Pravara*, *Sākha* and *Gōtra*, and perform the domestic ceremonies in accordance with one of the *Grihya Śūtras* belonging to each of the *Vēdas*. Thus there is no *Sāstraic* difference in the customs and manners observed by those of one sect and those of another. And yet intermarriage is forbidden though interdining is allowed. The former is, perhaps, owing to the fact of their early settlement in certain localities in separate communities keeping aloof from others.

The Brahmins of all sections are found throughout the State, and live in houses situated in compounds like those of the Nayers and Nambuthiris; but the **Habitations** Brahmins in the Chittur Taluk live in streets like those in the Palghat taluk. These streets are occupied purely by Brahmins, who never allow the Sudras to live in their midst. Only Kammālans are allowed to pass through them, and members of the caste below them are never allowed to enter into them.

Marriage prohibitions.—The same marriage prohibitions based on the *Gōtras* and *Pravaras* which are in vogue among the Nambuthiris are prevailing among the Tamil Brahmins also. Each division is endogamous; and though the intermarriage between the members of the various sections is advocated by the enlightened social reformers, yet very few or no such intermarriages have hitherto taken place. A Brahmin's son is allowed to marry his sister's daughter and *vice versa*.

Brahmin girls are married before puberty and in no case is post-puberty marriage allowed. The gift of a maiden (*Kanyika dānam*) to a suitable

Marriage Customs.

husband is made between seven and ten years of age, but now this period is exceeded owing to the difficulty of securing suitable husbands for them. The custom formerly was, that when a young man has to be married, his parents used to select a suitable girl after the necessary examination and agreement of horoscopes, but now this custom has quite disappeared. It is the anxiety of the girl's parents to get suitable husbands for them, and horoscopes of boys in their locality or elsewhere are collected and examined by competent astrologers of whom there are many everywhere. In the event of proper agreement between the horoscope of the girl and that of the boy, and of sufficient satisfaction regarding his conduct and the status of his family, the girl's parents engage the service of an intermediary or middle man to talk the matter over with the boy's parents and sound them in regard to the proposed union. Very often days and even months pass before any settlement is made. The old *Vedic* or *Sastraic* ideals for the selection of a bride and a bridegroom are very much overlooked, and the settlement of the proposal very much depends upon the gifts, presents and other prospects which the parents of the bridegroom may expect from the other party. Very often there is a haggling as to the settlement of the bridegroom's price (*Varadekshina*), which varies with the wealth and status of the family and with the University and other qualifications of the boy or the young man. A Brahman graduate can, in these days, without any inheritance, command a very high price, so much as Rs. 2,000 or more, in the matrimonial market, and a matriculate under such circumstances may get between Rs. 750 and Rs. 1,000, while a young man in an intermediate stage may get an amount varying between these limits. Young men of rich and respectable parents get more than three thousand rupees with presents of silver and copper vessels for their future domestic use and gold ornaments for their wearing. When the parents of the bride and bridegroom consent to the proposed match, an auspicious day is selected, when the parents and relations of bridegroom go to the house of the former, and talk over formally the conditions on which the marriage is to take place. A portion of the bridegroom's price is paid in advance by the bride's father at the time. The bride is in some cases given a cloth worth ten or twelve rupees by the bridegroom's father. Those assembled

are formally treated to a chewing of betels, nuts and tobacco; but now they are treated to a feast. Henceforward the girl is said to be betrothed, and the ceremony is called the betrothal ceremony. The auspicious day on which the marriage is to take place is also fixed by the astrologer at the time.

From that day preparations for the wedding are also made. A *pandal* is made and decorated in front of the house and invitations are sent round to the relatives and friends on both sides by the parents of the contracting couple. The marriage rites now in vogue do not differ from those in *Vedic* times in all essential particulars. The Brahmins of each section follow the *Grihya Sūtras* related in their *Sākha*. The account of the wedding and other ceremonies given in the following pages is in accordance with the *Apāsthamba Sūtras* of Black Yajur Veda.

Nischikathambula :—The marriage ceremony begins with *Nischikathāmbula* (exchange of betel leaves as a sign of settlement) for which a cloth (*Pudava*) to the bride-elect, *Pushpam* (flower), sandal, ornaments, cocoanuts and plantains in a copper or brass tray are taken to the bride's house, where the bride is dressed in the new garments and adorned with the ornaments they have brought. The bridegroom's father is seated on a plank in the midst of an assembly of Brahmins, *Vaidiks* and others, when, after a bestowal of blessings, the bride's father proclaims his intention to give his daughter in marriage to the bridegroom, and that he may come for the purpose after the completion of the *Vratams* (expiatory ceremonies). The bridegroom and his party return to their residence, and again go back to the bride's house for the aforesaid ceremony.

Vratams :—The Brahmins who have been invited assemble in the bride's house. The bridegroom sits on the marriage dais, and after repeating certain Vedic verses, begins with the permission of the assembled the following *Vratams* :—*Prājapathyam*, *Soumyam*, *Agnéyam*, and *Vaiswadevam*. The God Ganapathy is first worshipped. *Samidūdhanam* (adoration of fire by a *Brahmachāri*) is next performed; and ceremonies relating to each of these *Vratams* are performed and completed. All these *Vratams* should have been performed during the period of *Bramhacharyam*. It is not now done in time, and so an expiatory ceremony, which is intended to make up for the omission and which consists of some ghee oblations and gifts

of money (a few annas) to the Brahmans, is then performed. Throughout the *Vratam* ceremonies the bridegroom is helped by a spiritual father or *Guru*, who is generally his father and in his absence his brother or some near relation. The *Guru* then sprinkles water over the bridegroom's body, and directs him to perform the *Kandarshi Tharpanam* (offering of water, gingelly and rice, as an oblation to Rishis). The various *Vratams* are gone through rapidly, and oblations of ghee are offered to the various *Dévas* and *Pitris*. Ten small vessels filled with earth, and various seeds are sowed in them and moistened with water. A piece of cotton thread dyed with turmeric is tied round his wrist. A small silver or copper vessel is placed on a leaf to the northeast of the sacred Fire, and is made to represent Varuna, and a piece of new cloth is tied round the vessel. *Samávarthanam* ceremony (ceremony to close the Brahmacharyam or bachelorship) is next performed. The bridegroom then gets himself shaved, bathes and is neatly dressed as a married man and adorned in his best.

Kasiyatra :—Having rewarded the *Guru* for his tuition, the bridegroom goes on a mock pilgrimage to Benares—a tour intended to complete his education. This is a remnant of the *Snáthakarma* rite at which a *Brahmachari* or Vedic student leaves the *Guru's* house at the close of his studies, and performs a ceremony of oblation to become an initiated householder or *Snáthaka*. Carrying with him an umbrella, a fan and a bundle containing some rice, arecanut and cocconut, he goes eastward, when his would be father-in-law meets him and brings him to the house at which the marriage is to be celebrated. The father offers him his daughter's hand; and as an assurance of his promise, he is given *Támbula* (betel leaves and nut). The bridegroom then returns to his quarters, and is taken in procession to the bride's house in a palanquin or (*Otta-kattil*) single cot. As he alights at the decorated pandal, the bride joins him. Both the bride and bridegroom are taken on the shoulders of their respective maternal uncles, standing face to face in a conspicuous part of the Pandal. Here the bridal pair exchange garlands, after which they sit on a swing and are treated to a little vocal and instrumental music. A few married women go round them three times carrying water, a light, fruits, and betel in a copper or brass tray. The pair are then conducted into the house, and are seated in a conspicuous seat

assigned to them. As they enter the house, they are directed to put their right foot first. Betel leaves, nuts, plantain fruits, and cocoanuts are then distributed to those present there.

Marriage Proper:—*Vivāham* or marriage proper now begins, and the bridegroom after a Puja to Ganapathy pronounces the *Sankalpa* with the intention of taking a proper girl for wife in order that he may obtain sons in the interests of *Dharma* or duty.

Varaprasna:—The bridegroom then sends some of his relatives to the bride's father to request him to give his daughter to the young man (himself) of the said Gotra, to which he answers in the affirmative. At this stage, their *Gótras* are distinctly mentioned, so as to ensure that they are not within the prohibited degrees. The bride's father declares his intention of giving his daughter in marriage to the bridegroom-elect, who says that he accepts her. The bridegroom is then seated on a heap of paddy when the father sits on the right side of the daughter and begins his *Sankalpa* (mental resolve) for *Kanyúkadána* (gift of the maiden) with his wife near him (*Pathnyasaha*).

He then mentions the several objects he has in view in the bestowal of his daughter, and emphasises the attainment of *Bramhaloka* (abode of Bramha, the Creator), to himself, to his ancestors, and descendants to the tenth generation by the gift of the daughter in marriage to the young man. Both the father of the girl and his wife then wash the feet of the bridegroom, adorn him with sandal and flowers and worship him as *Vishnu* himself. The father then sits upon the heap of paddy with his daughter on his lap facing the east, the mother stands facing northwards and the bridegroom also stands facing westwards in front of the father. The father then or, by proxy, his family priest recites three times the genealogies of the bride and bridegroom to the third generation, makes gift of a *Saligramam* with all puja vessels, a cow, a calf, and land along with the daughter to the bridegroom, his wife pouring a little water into the hands of the bride before she is given into the hands of the young man. As he makes a gift of the daughter, the father addresses the bridegroom thus:—"I give unto thee who art a Vishnu this girl rich in gold and fully adorned with the jewels

with the desire of entering *Bramhalôka* and for the salvation of my forefathers". And looking at the assembly, he says, "I give unto this Brahman, who is a vedic student and worthy of a maiden (*Kanyaka*), my daughter for taking part with him in the discharge of religious duties and the procreation of offspring".¹ Then reciting a number of Vedic texts for the expiation of the sin arising from the gift, the bridegroom accepts the girl and returns with her to the seats assigned to them. He performs the *Vivaha Sankalpa* and then the *Nandi Srâdha* and *Punyâham*, after which the sacred fire is kindled.

Varapûja or Madhuparka.—After the prayer above-mentioned has been recited, the bridegroom sits down on a stool or cushion, which is presented to him. He first recites a text of the *Yajur Veda*, "I step on this for the sake of food and other benefits on this variously splendid foot-stool." The bride's father presents to him a cushion made of twenty leaves of *kusa* grass, holding it up with both hands, and exclaiming "The Cushion! The Cushion! The Cushion!" The bridegroom replies, "I accept the cushion" and taking it, places it on the ground, under his feet, while he recites the following prayer:—"May those plants over which *Sôma* presides, and which are variously dispersed on the earth incessantly, grant me happiness while this cushion is placed under my feet". Another is presented to him which he accepts in the same manner, saying, "May those numerous plants over which *Sôma* presides, and which are salutary a hundred different ways, incessantly grant me happiness while I sit on this cushion." Instead of these prayers, which are peculiar to the Brahmans that use the *Sama Veda*, the following text is commonly recited:—"I obscure my rivals, as the sun does other luminaries; I tread on this, as the type of him who injures me".²

The bride's father next offers a vessel of water, thrice exclaiming, "Water for ablutions!" The bridegroom declares his acceptance of it, and looks into the vessel, saying, "Generous water! I view thee, return in the form of fertilizing rain from him, from whom thou dost proceed;" that is, from the Sun, for it is acknowledged, says the commentator, that rain proceeds from vapours raised by the heat of the sun. The bridegroom takes up water in the palms of both hands joined together, and throws it on his left foot, saying, "I wash my left

"foot, and fix prosperity in this realm": ~~he also~~ throws water on his right foot, saying, "I wash my right foot, and introduce prosperity into this realm"; and he then throws water on both feet, saying, "I wash first one and then the other," and lastly both feet, "that the realm may thrive and intrepidity be gained". The following is the text of the *Yajus* which is generally used instead of the preceding prayers:—"Thou dost afford various elegance, I accept thee, who dost so; afford it for the ab-lution of my feet".

An *Arghya* (that is, water, rice, and *Dhurva* grass, in a conch, or in a vessel shaped like one or rather like a boat), is next presented to the bridegroom in a similar manner, and accepted by him with equal formality. He pours the water on his own head, saying, "thou art the splendour of food; through thee may become glorious." This prayer is taken from the *Yajus*, but the followers of that Veda use different texts, accepting the *Arghya* with this prayer, "Ye are waters (*apah*), through you may I obtain all my wishes;" and pouring out the "water with this text, "I dismiss you to the ocean; return to your source, harmless unto me, most excellent water! But my beverage is not poured forth".

A vessel of water is then offered by the bride's father, who thrice exclaims, "Take water to be sipped", the bridegroom accepts it, saying, "Thou art glorious, grant me glory, or else, "conduct me to glory, endue me with splendour, render me dear to all people, make me owner of cattle, and preserve me unhurt in all my limbs". The bride's father fills a vessel with honey, curds, and clarified butter; he covers it with another vessel, and presents it to the bridegroom, exclaiming, three times, "Take the *Madhuparka*". The bridegroom accepts it, places it on the ground, and looks into it, saying, "Thou art glorious, may I become so". He takes the food three times saying, "Thou art the sustenance of the glorious; thou art the nourishment of the splendid, thou art the food of the fortunate, grant me prosperity". He then gently eats until he is satisfied.

Although these texts are taken from the *Yajus*, yet other prayers from the same Veda are used by the sects which follow it. While looking into the vessel, the bridegroom says, "I view thee with the eye of the sun who draws unto himself what he

"contemplates". On accepting the *Madhuparka*, the bridegroom says, "I take thee with the assent of the generous sun, with the arms of both sons of Aswini; with the hands of the cherishing luminary. He mixes it, saying, "may I mix thee O venerable parent and remove whatever might be hurtful in the eating of thee". He takes it three times, saying, "May I eat that sweet, best and nourishing form of honey; and may I thus become excellent, sweet tempered and well nourished by food". After eating until he is satisfied and after sipping water, he touches his mouth and other parts of the body, with his hand, saying, "May there be speech in my mouth breath in my nostrils, sight in my eye-balls, hearing in my ears, strength in my arms, firmness in my thighs; may my limbs and members remain unhurt together with my soul".

These hospitable rites are then concluded by letting loose the cow at the intercession of the guests. A barber who attends for that purpose exclaims, "The cow! The cow!" upon which the guest pronounces this text—"Release the cow from the fetters of *Varuna*." "May she subdue my foe; may she destroy the enemies of both him (the host) and me. Dismiss the cow, that she may eat grass, and drink water". When the cow has been released the guest thus addresses her:—"I have earnestly entreated this prudent person (or according to another interpretation of the text, each docile person), saying, "kill not the innocent, harmless cow, who is mother of Rudra, daughter of Vasus, sister of *Adityas* and the source of ambrosia." In the Yajur Vêda the following prayer is added to this text:—"May she expiate my sins and his (naming the host), release her that she may graze". It is evident that the guests' intercessions imply a practice, now become obsolete, of slaying a cow for the purpose of hospitality."

Being thus affianced, the bride and bridegroom then walk forth, while he thus addresses her:—"May the regents of space, may the air, the sun, the fire, dispel that anxiety which thou feelest in thy mind, and turn thy heart to me".

He proceeds thus, while they look at each other, "Be gentle in thy aspect, and loyal to thy husband, be fortunate in cattle, amiable to thy mind; and beautiful in thy person; be mother of valiant sons, be fond of delights, be cheerful, and bring prosperity to our bipeds and quadrupeds". At

this stage of the ceremony the following prayers are recited :—
 “Soma gave her to the Sun, the Sun gave her to the regent of
 “Fire, Fire gave her to me; with her he has given me wealth
 “and male offspring. May she be a most auspicious cause of
 “prosperity, never desert me, etc.”

Then a circular substance made of twisted grass is placed on the head of the bride, and the bridegroom repeats the following formula—“Blessed by the Surya, sit round the sacred
 “Fire, and look at the dharba ring, my mother-in-law and
 “brother-in-law”. A yoke containing two holes at one end is also placed over it at right angles to it, the other end of the yoke being held in a northerly direction. A gold coin is inserted in one of the holes and sanctified water is sprinkled over her. Then the yoke and the *andwa* are removed from the head, with the recital of the following texts :—“Oh Indra !
 “cleanse and purify this girl just as you did in the case of
 “*Abala* by pouring water through three holes before marrying
 “her. May the gold prove a blessing to you. May the yoke,
 “the hole of the yoke, bring happiness to you. May we be
 “blessed to unite your body with mine. May we become puri-
 “fied with the Sun and may this water give you health and
 “long life.”

She is dressed in a new cloth which she has to wear during next four days of the marriage festivities. The following prayers are recited in this connection :—“May those
 “generous women who spun and wound the thread, and who
 “wove the warp and weft of this cloth, generously clothe thee
 “to old age : long-lived women ! Put on this raiment. Clothe
 “her, invest her with appeal ; prolong her life to old age ;
 “mayst thou live a hundred years”.

Mangala Dharana :—The *tāli* or *mangalasutra* is tied round the neck of the bride by the husband who, says, “O lovely girl ! I tie this auspicious thread, which I expect to be the source of my long life, round thy neck. Mayst thou live a hundred years”.

A girdle made of *munja* grass twisted is tied round the waist of the bride by the bridegroom, and both return to a conspicuous seat hand in hand and seat themselves on it. He prepares the *hómam* or sacrificial fire and hallows the implements of sacrifice.

The next portion of the wedding ceremony is the *Pānigrahanam* (clasping of hand), for which a few preliminary gifts are made.

The bridegroom takes the bride's right hand, reciting the following prayers:—"I take thy hand for the sake of good fortune, and thou mayst become old with me, thy husband. "May the deities, namely, the divine sun (*Aryamān*) and the "prolific Being (*Sāvitri*) and the God of love, give as a "matron unto me that I may be a householder." The next important ceremonial is the *Sapthapadi* or the bride's taking seven steps. It is the most important of all wedding rites, for the marriage is complete and irrevocable as soon as she has taken the seventh step and not sooner. She is directed to take the seven steps in a northerly direction from the fire. The wife stands facing the east, and the husband standing before her takes hold of her right foot, and makes her take seven steps with the recital of the following:—1. "May Vishnu cause thee to take one step for the sake of obtaining food. 2. May Vishnu cause thee to take two steps for the sake of obtaining strength. 3. Three steps for the sake of solemn acts of religion. 4. Four steps for the sake of obtaining happiness. 5. Five steps for the sake of cattle. 6. Six steps for the sake of increase of wealth. 7. Seven steps for the sake of obtaining priests for the sake of performing sacrifices". (In the Yajur Veda the texts are varied, so that the third step is for the increase of wealth, and the sixth for obtaining happy seasons). The bridegroom then addresses the bride. "Having completed "the seven steps, be my companion". May I become thy "associate. May none interrupt thy association with me. "May such as are disposed to promote our happiness, confirm "thy association with me". The bridegroom then addresses the spectators. "This woman is auspicious, approach and "view her; (and having conferred our good wishes) grant auspicious fortune on her, depart to your respective abodes."

"I am the Saman (Veda), thou art the Rig (Veda), I am "the sky, thou art the earth; come let us marry; let us hold "conjugal intercourse; let us procreate offspring, let us obtain "sons; may they reach old age; may we, being affectionate, "glorious, and well disposed, see during a hundred years, live "a hundred years, and hear a hundred years".

The bridegroom then offers sixteen oblations of ghee to the Vedic deities Agni (fire), Soman, Gandharva, Indra, Varuna, Brihaspathy, etc., for their conjugal happiness. The other portions of the ceremonial are *Asmarohanam* and *Lajahomam*.¹ The ceremony is brought to an end by another Homam named *Jayāti Homam*, after which the *nunja* girdle is untied, and the married couple are blessed by the priest and the Brahman *Vaidiks* assembled there then.

Grahapravesanam :—On the same afternoon, the bride and bridegroom go in procession in a palanquin to the house or temporary residence of the latter, and the married couple seat themselves on a bull's hide with the neck towards the east.² After a puja to Ganapathy and *Pathiprayana Japam* i.e., prayers to deities to protect them in their way to the husband's house, he recites the following texts when she ascends the carriage or palanquin:—"O Wife of the Sun! ascend this vehicle resembling the beautiful blossoms of the cotton tree and lutea, tinged with various tints and coloured like gold, well constructed, furnished with gold wheels, and the source of ambrosia, (that is, of blessings), bring happiness to thy husband". Proceeding with the bride, he or some other person for him, recites the following texts on their coming to a cross road; "May robbers, who infest the road, remain ignorant (of the journey); may the married couple reach a place of security and difficult of access, by easy roads; and may foes keep aloof".

Alighting from the carriage, the bridegroom leads the bride into a house, chanting the hymn called *Vamadévāya*. Matrons welcome the bride, and make her sit down, on a bull's hide of the same colour and placed in the same manner as before. The bridegroom then recites the following prayer:—"may kine here produce numerous young: may horses and human beings do so; and may the deity sit here, by whose favour sacrifices are accomplished with gifts of a thousandfold." The bridegroom sitting by her side makes oblations to the aforesaid deities for the blessings of prosperity, happiness, and offspring. Then a male child of a woman who had borne many living sons is placed on her lap and given plantain fruits. The bride and bridegroom rise up, and are shown the pole-star and *Arundhathi*, reciting the following texts:—"Heaven is stable;

1. Vide Marriage ceremonies of the Nambuthiris, page 190.

2. They are now seated on a grass mat,

“the earth is stable; this universe is stable; these mountains are stable; may this woman be stable in her husband’s family”. (Dhruva, the pole-star, also signifies stable, fixed, steady, firm).

Aupasana:—The bridegroom then makes for the first time *Agnéya Stálipakam*, or oblation of rice cooked in the domestic fire itself, in order that the fire may become so holy as to have it performed every morning and evening with oblations of uncooked rice. The first *Aupasana* takes place in that night, for which the couple fast during the day. During the first three nights they sleep on the same cot; though they cannot approach each other. A twig of the pipal tree decorated with flowers, sandal paste, and covered with cloth or thread representing Gandharva is placed between them to prevent their approaching together. After midnight of the fourth day the stick is removed.

The account above given regarding the *Grahaṇpravesanam* and *Aupasanam* is in accordance with the Grihyā Sūtras, but in practice they are done at the bride’s house. After going to the house of the bridegroom, the contracting parties are served with some milk and a few plantain fruits. After the usual blessings, they return in procession to the bride’s house. There is nothing of importance on the second and third days except the performance of *Aupasana* by the conjugal pair.

Séshahómam:—On the night of the fourth day after 1 P. M., this ceremony is performed, for which six oblations with as many prayers are addressed to fire, air, sun, prajāpathy, oceans, rivers, sky and to the twelve months. Four drops of ghee are also left on the bride’s head. The prayers to remove anything injurious in the person of the bride which might be injurious to her husband, to her offspring, to cattle, to the household, and to honour and glory are then recited. The following text is recited while the water is poured on the bride’s head:—“That blameable portion of thy person which “would have been injurious to thy husband, thy offspring, thy “cattle, thy household, and thy honour, I render destructive “of paramours: May thy body, thus cleared from evil, reach “old age with me”. The bride is then fed with food prepared in a caldron, and the following text is recited:—“I unite thy “breath with my breath; thy bones with my bones; thy flesh “with my flesh; and thy skin with my skin”.

This is followed by the recital of a *Gāṇḍāna Māntram*. After the distribution of betel leaves and arecanut to the Brahmins assembled, the bride and the bridegroom chew betel for the first time, after which they bathe, and neatly dressed they appear before the *Vaidiks* assembled, who bless them.

Conclusion : The marriage ceremonies thus far described may be here recapitulated. The bridegroom goes in procession to the house where the bride's father resides, and is there welcomed as a guest. The bride is given to him by her father in the form usual at every solemn donation, and their hands are bound together with grass. He clothes the bride with a garment, and the skirts of her mantle and his are tied together. The bridegroom makes oblations to fire, and the bride drops rice on it as an oblation. The bridegroom solemnly takes her hand in marriage. She treads on a grinding stone. They walk round the fire. The bride takes steps seven times, conducted by the bridegroom, and he then dismisses the spectators, the marriage being now complete and irrevocable. In the evening of the same day the bride sits down on a grass mat and the bridegroom points out to her the Pole star as an emblem of constancy. They then partake of a meal. The bridegroom remains four days at the house of the bride's father, and on the fifth or any auspicious day he conducts her to his own house in solemn procession. She is there welcomed by his kindred, and the solemnity ends with oblations to fire.

The wedding ceremonies thus far described are in accordance with the *Apasthamba Grihya Sūtras* of Black Yajur Veda; but the Tamil Brahmins, who follow the *Sama Vēda*, perform their domestic ceremonies as prescribed by *Drāhyayana Grihya Sūtras*, which, so far as marriage rites are concerned, differ only in some particulars of secondary importance; a few of which are given here.

While the bridegroom is welcomed with formalities (*Vara-puja*) already mentioned or more properly before his arrival, the bride bathes with the recital of the following texts :—"Three vessels of water are severally poured on her head with three different prayers:—" 1. Love ! I know thy name. Thou art called an intoxicating beverage. Unite the bridegroom happily. For thee was framed the inebriating draught. Fire ! thy best organ is here. Through devotion wert thou created".

"May this oblation be efficacious". "2. Damsel! I anoint this thy generative organ with honey, because it is the second mouth of the Creator. By that thou subduest all males, thou unsubdued by that, thou art lively, and dost hold dominions. May this oblation be efficacious". 3. "May the primeval ruling sages, who framed the female organ as a fire that consumeth flesh, and thereby framed a procreating juice, grant the prolific power that proceeds from the three horned bull and from the sun. May this oblation be efficacious". To elucidate the first of these texts the commentator cites the following passage:—"The sage Vasishta, the regent of the moon, the ruler of Heaven, the preceptor of the Gods, the great forefather of all beings, however old in the practice of devotion and old by the progress of age was deluded by women. Liquors distilled from sugar, from grain, and from the blossoms of *Bassia*, are three sorts of intoxicating drinks; the fourth is woman, by whom this world is deluded. One who contemplates a beautiful woman becomes intoxicated, and so does he who squaffs an inebriating beverage. Woman is called an inebriating draught, because she intoxicates by her looks". To explain the second text, the same author quotes a passage from the Veda, intimating that Bramha has two mouths, one containing all holiness, and the other allotted for the production of all beings; "for they are created from his mouth".

But the ritual of the *Sáma Vēdi* priests makes the gift of the damsel precede the tying of the knot, and, inconsistently enough, directs the mantles to be tied before the bridegroom has clothed the bride. After the donation has been accepted as above-mentioned, the bride's father should tie a knot in the bridegroom's mantle over the presents given with the bride, while the affianced pair are looking at each other. The cow is then released in the manner before described; a libation of water is made; and the bride's father meditates the *Gayitri*, and ties a knot with the skirts of the bride's and bridegroom's mantles, after saying, "Ye must be inseparably united in matters of duty, wealth, and love".¹ The bridegroom afterwards clothes the bride with the following ceremonies.

According to the followers of *Samaveda*, the bridegroom, immediately after the scarf has been placed on the bride's

1. Asiatic Researches, Vol. II, pages 288-311.

shoulders, conducts her towards the sacrificial fire, saying, "Soma (the regent of the Moon) gave her to the sun, the sun gave her to the regent of fire, fire has given her to me, and with her wealth and male offspring." The bride then goes to the western side of the fire and recites the following prayer while she steps on a mat made of *Virana* grass and covered with silk:—"May our Lord assign me the path by which I may reach the abode of my Lord." She sits down on the edge of the mat and the bridegroom offers six oblations of clarified butter, reciting the following prayers, while the bride touches the shoulder of the bridegroom with her right hand:—1. "May fire come first among the Gods; may it rescue her offspring from the fetters of death; may Varuna (king of waters), grant that this woman should never bemoan a calamity befalling her children. 2. May the domestic perpetual fire guard her; may it render her progeny long-lived; may she never be widowed; may she be mother of surviving children; may she experience the joy of having male off-spring. 3. May Heaven protect thy back; may air and the two sons of Aswini protect thy thighs; may the sun protect thy children, while sucking thy breast; and may Brihaspathy protect them until they wear clothes; and afterwards may the assembled Gods protect them. 4. May no lamentation arise at night in thy abode; may crying women enter other houses than thine; mayst thou never admit sorrow to thy breast; mayst thou prosper in thy husband's house; blest with his survival and viewing cheerful children. 5. I lift barrenness, the death of children, sins, and every other evil as I would lift a chaplet off thy head; and I consign the fetters (of premature death) to thy foes. 6. May death depart from me, and immortality come; may Yama, the child of the sun, render me fearless. Death! follow a different path from that by which we proceed, and from that which the Gods travel. To thee who seest and who hearest, I call, saying, hurt not our offspring nor our progenitors. And may this oblation be efficacious." 1. The bridegroom then presents oblations, naming the three worlds separately and conjointly and offers either four or five oblations to the fire and to the moon. The bride and bridegroom then rise up, and the latter passes from the left of the former side to her right, and makes her join her hands in a hollow form.

According to the ritual, which conforms to the Sāmaveda, the bridegroom sits down near the fire with the bride, and finishes this part of the ceremony of making oblations, while he names the three worlds separately and conjointly. The taking of the bride's hand in marriage is thus completed. In the evening of the same day, as soon as the star appears, the bride sits down on a bull's hide¹ which must be of a red colour and must be placed with the neck towards the east and the hair upwards. The bridegroom sits down near her, makes oblations while he names the three worlds as usual, and then makes six oblations with the following prayers, each time pouring the remainder of the clarified butter on the bride's head:—1. "I obviate by this full oblation all the ill marks in the lines of thy hands, in thy eye-lashes, and in the spots (on thy body). 2. I obviate by this full oblation all the ill marks in thy hair and whatever is sinful in thy looking, or in thy crying. 3. I obviate by this full oblation all that may be sinful in thy temper, in thy speaking and in thy laughing. 4. I obviate by this full oblation all the ill marks in thy teeth and on the dark intervals between them, in thy hands and in thy feet. 5. I obviate by this full oblation all the ill marks in thy thighs, on thy privy part, on thy haunches, and on the lineaments of thy figure. 6. Whatever natural or accidental evil marks were on all thy limbs, I have obviated all such marks by these full oblations of clarified butter. May this oblation be efficacious".²

The following customs are in vogue among the Brahmans who marry for the third time. It is believed that a third marriage is always inauspicious, and the bride will soon become a widow. When an individual marries a third wife, the man is made to marry the *arka* plant (*calotropis gigantea*) to prevent further mishap, and the real marriage becomes the fourth. In an orthodox fashion it is generally celebrated on some Sunday or Monday when the constellation *Hastham* becomes visible. The bridegroom, accompanied by a priest and another Brahman, repairs to a temple or a spot near the *arka* plant, and decorates it with a cloth and a piece of string and is symbolized into the sun. The bridegroom then invokes it thus, "Oh! Master of three Lókas

1. A grass mat is now substituted for it.

2. Asiatic Researches Vol. II, pages 287-311.

"or worlds, Oh! the seven horsed, Oh! Ravi, avert the evils of the third marriage." Next the plant is addressed in the following words:—"You are the oldest of the plants of this world, Bramha created you to save such of us as have to marry a third time, so please become my wife". The Brahman who accompanies the bridegroom becomes his father-in-law for the time being, and says to him, "I give you in marriage Aditya's great grand daughter, Ravi's grand daughter, and my daughter *Arkanya*". All the ceremonies such as the preparation of *Hómam*, *Táli*-tying, etc., are performed as, at a regular marriage, and after the recitation of a few Vedic hymns, the plant is cut down. According to some persons the plant is believed to be a willing scape-goat to others' ills. Oil and ghee applied to the head of the victim are sometimes transferred to this plant, when it withers and saves the man, even as Baber is said to have saved his son. "May the *arka* plant grow luxuriant in your house". It is the commonest form of curse. On the other hand, the plant is held sacred by those who follow the *Yajur Vêda* or *Sama Vêda*: they use the leaves during the *Nandi* ceremony, which is one of the marriage rites. The leaves of the plant are used on the *Rathasapthami* day (the 7th day after the new-moon in the month of Chingam) in propitiation of the sun. In the worship of the *Rishis* and *Pitris* at the *Upákarma* ceremony the Brahmins who follow the *Sámaveda* make use of the flowers and leaves of the plant. The juice of this plant is a favourite agent in the hands of the suicides.

The various ceremonies performed for the wedding by the bride and bridegroom during the four days and the recital of the Vedic hymns connected with them are at the dictates of the priest. The real significance of the holy texts and the purpose for which they are intended are entirely lost sight of. In fact, the formalities are gone through without any comprehension of the real purpose of the ceremonies. The worship of *Agni* (fire), begun on the wedding day to be continued throughout their life-time, is terminated on the fifth or sixth day, and renewed before every domestic ceremony and closed thereafter. On the second and third days of the marriage ceremonies *Hómams* are performed in the morning and evening, and the *Nalágu* ceremony is also performed in the afternoon. In this the couple are seated on planks covered with mats in the midst of a large number of women assembled within the pandal. In

front of them is a tray in which are placed betel leaves, areca-nuts, fruits, flowers and turmeric paste. The women sing songs, and the bride also sings in praise of the bridegroom. Taking a little of the turmeric paste made red by the addition of chunám, she makes marks by drawing lines over his feet (*Nalgu idal*). The ceremony closes with the waving of *Arathi* and the distribution of betel leaves to the women assembled. On the evening of the third day, a procession is got up at the expense of the maternal uncle of the bride, who, mounted on an elephant or seated in a palanquin and accompanied by a long line of men and women, all neatly dressed and well decked out, goes round the street and is made to worship the deity, after which all return to the bride's house, when the bridal pair exchange garlands and are blessed. At night also, after the usual *Aupásana* ceremony, a girl is dressed up as a boy and another girl well dressed and decked out accompany the bridal pair in a procession got up by the women to go round the street, when some mock play and amusements are indulged in. After their supper, they are seated on a swing, when songs are sung and the guests are entertained with music by professional songsters. There is also a similar procession on the fourth day at night.

Present condition of Matrimonial Relations among the Brahmans :—As has been said, the marriage ceremonies last for four days, during which the bridegroom's party, the relations and friends on both sides are sumptuously fed at 11 A. M., and 8 P. M., every day. A fashion has also been set up now-a-days to treat them to a breakfast at 8 A. M., and to a lunch at 4 P. M., with coffee or tea with sweetmeats.

In grand celebrations, the bride's father, in addition to the bridegroom's price (which may be two or three thousand rupees), spends a similar amount, a major portion of which is spent in feeding the bridegroom's party, bride's relations, friends and others who attend the wedding, and the balance, in presents of clothes and ornaments to the bridegroom, and in providing the bride with vessels of silver and copper, according to the demands of the bridegroom's party. Among the bride's parents of moderate means, the expenses may vary from Rs. 1,500 to ~~Rs.~~ Rs. 2,000. Among very poor people, the expenditure may amount to Rs. 500. Now-a-days there is a tendency for the diminution of

expenses connected with feeding as the demands in other directions have comparatively increased. While the expenditure on the part of the bride's parents are enormous, the bridegroom's parents try to make considerable profits out of the wedding. A portion of the bridegroom's price is set apart for the ornaments of the bride and for other items in connection with the ceremony, and the balance is reserved as a saving. Very often, when the bride's father is unable to pay the bridegroom's price in ready cash, he pays a portion of it and either undertakes to provide his daughter with ornaments before she joins her husband, after the nuptials, or gives a promissory note for the payment of the balance at a convenient opportunity. It is further incumbent on him to provide the bridegroom with presents of cloth on all auspicious occasions, to spend a few hundreds of rupees in the purchase of vessels and presents of clothes for the nuptials, and a similar or smaller sum for the pregnancy rites. The least cause of dissatisfaction or misunderstanding subjects the poor little girl to every kind of ill-treatment in the house of her father-in-law. Threats to re-marry the bridegroom are also conveyed to the bride's parents, if they will not make amends for any frivolous mistakes of omission or commission on their part. Education, instead of nullifying or moderating these injurious effects, only encourages them. In fact, the University standard has become a powerful engine of oppression at the hands of the girl's father. "A Bachelor of Arts", if he is a bachelor, even though he may be a homeless pauper living upon his friends' bounty, must have a handsome wife, adorned with jewelry and ornaments from head to foot and cash payment of two thousand rupees or more. The bridegrooms thus command a high price in the marriage market, and become the object of vigorous competition. The rich get their daughters married in time to suitable husbands, while the poor are driven to reckless borrowings or, as the last alternative, resort to any means, if they can avoid the disgrace of allowing their daughters to remain unmarried before they come of age.

Unless the rich and other gentlemen of light and leading set an example by following the old Sastraic ideals, and put an end to the custom of receiving the bridegroom's price, and societies are also organized in all Brahmanic centres to condemn

it, and thereby to elevate the moral tone of the people in these matters, worse evils may be anticipated, *i. e.*, only girls whom their parents can afford to marry can survive.

In this connection, it will be interesting to note the excellent example which the Rajaput clans have set and which deserves to be followed throughout India. "Themselves among the purest representatives of the Indo-Aryan type, they have revived the best traditions of the Vedic age and have established for themselves the ordinance that no girl shall be married before she is fourteen years old and that the marriage expenses shall in no case exceed a certain proportion of the father's yearly income. That, I venture to think, is the aim which those who would reform society should, for the present, set before themselves. If they succeed in doing for India what Colonel Walter did for Rajaputana, they will achieve more than any Indian reformer has yet accomplished. To bring back the Vedas is no unworthy ideal."

"The Rajaputana movement is so remarkable in itself and contains the germs of such high promise that it calls for fuller notice. Nearly twenty years ago, at the suggestion of Colonel Walter, then agent of the Governor-General in Rajaputana, all the Sardars of the various States of Rajaputana assembled at Ajmer for the purpose of discussing arrangements for regulating the expenses incurred on the occasion of marriages, deaths, etc., among Rajaputs of all ranks except the ruling chiefs. By the unanimous decision of these leaders of Rajaput society, a series of observances were prescribed which, revised from time to time, have now assumed the form of definite rules enforced by the influence of a society known, in grateful commemoration of its founder, as the Walterkrit Rajputra Hitakáriní Sabha. The chief political officer in Rajaputana is the president of the society, and in every State a committee is appointed, consisting of a Sardar, an official member of the Charan and Rao castes, to make arrangements for carrying out the regulations regarding marriages and deaths and other instructions embodied in the rules."

"Under the head of marriage expenses, if the marriage is that of a Thakur himself or of an eldest son, sister or daughter, the limit of expenditure is fixed on the following scale:—When the value of the State is below Rs. 1,000, not more than

two-thirds of the annual income may be spent at the marriage; for values between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 10,000 the proportion is reduced to half; for incomes between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 20,000 to one-third; and for incomes above Rs. 20,000 to one-fourth; In the case of marriages of sons other than the eldest, or of nephews and nieces and brothers of the Thakur who are dependent for support upon him, the expenditure may not exceed one-tenth of that admissible in the cases stated above. The abuses attendant on the extravagant largess which used to be distributed among bards and musicians on the occasion of marriages have been got rid of by limiting this expenditure to a percentage of Rs. 6-12-0 on the annual income of the State, and by further restrictions limiting the claim to such presents to the residents of the territory in which the marriage takes place. Only the father of the bridegroom is liable to make such payments; the father of the bride cannot be charged".¹

In the case of the bride's parents who are poor a small sum of money is paid by those of the bridegroom to defray the expenses connected with the wedding.

When a Brahman girl comes of age, she is lodged in a room of her house, and the information of the joyful incident is sent round to the relatives and friends of the family. The open space in the front of the house is smeared with cow-dung, and decorated with figures as on all auspicious occasions. A few members (males and females) of the family, with a few cocoanuts and plantain fruits, go to the family of her husband to formally announce the glad tidings, when they are sumptuously fed and given a present of some money, varying with the status of the family.

The girl is dressed in a red garment, and a red mark of vermillion is put on her forehead. In the room are placed a vessel of rice, a vessel of water, and a lighted lamp; and these are waved round the face of the girl, who stands on a grass mat, beneath which is placed some paddy with a few annas. Her girl friends are allowed to be in company with her during the three days of her seclusion; they are all sumptuously fed with rice dyed yellow with turmeric (*pongal*), ordinary rice with curries and sweetmeats at the expense of the girl's aunt,

1. People of India by Sir Herbert Risley, pages 188-189.

parents of her husband, and her maternal uncle. Both in the early morning and evening the girls sitting on the verandah sing amorous songs and perform now and then a merry circular dance, clapping hands with appropriate songs.

On the forenoon of the fourth day, the girl and her friends anointing themselves with gingelly oil, go to a neighbouring tank or river, and bathe after cleaning themselves with soap. The girl drinks a little of milk, and eats a few slices of plantain fruits; and she plunges in water, throwing the vessel containing them over head into the water, which is taken by one of the virgins. After bath she is neatly dressed and well decked out. Riding in a palanquin or in a decent carriage with her friends behind, she returns home in procession after worshipping the local deity. There is a grand display of drum-beating and other musical instruments. Before entering the house the grown up women of the family and the neighbourhood, and the girls, gather round and perform a circular dance with appropriate songs. All enter the house, seat the girl on a grass mat, and a few of the elderly women wave round her face the articles already mentioned. The female guests assembled there are then sumptuously entertained. The girl is purified by another bath on the following day; and her friends are rewarded with a few annas each, for having been with her during the days of seclusion.

Nuptials or Garbhadana :—This is generally performed on an auspicious day within the first sixteen days after the menses. Very often, if the girl is weak, it is postponed to six months or a year with the consent of or according to the convenience of the parties. Sometimes the delay or default of the payment of a portion of the bridegroom's price may serve as a cause for the postponement. An auspicious day *Muhúrtham*, is selected by an astrologer, and during the forenoon of that day the ceremony of *Rithusánti* is performed. A brass or copper pot is filled with water and covered at the mouth with mango leaves, on which is placed a cocoanut dyed with turmeric, and an image thereon of Vishnu made of gold, silver or turmeric; and the various *Suktams* (Vedic prayers in honour of deities, *Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Sri, Bhu,*) are recited by Brahman *Vaidiks* who are invited, at the end of which the water thus consecrated is poured on the head of the wife by the

husband. *Ajya* or ghee oblations are offered to the abovementioned Gods or Goddesses. A dose of *Panchagavya* is also given to the wife and husband for their internal purification. If the girl has attained her puberty on an inauspicious day, certain expiatory ceremonies are then performed and gifts to Brahmins are also made at the time. On the night of the *Rithusanti* are performed the Nuptials. A few gifts to Brahman *Vaidiks* and a distribution of betel leaves and nuts to them and to others are made at the time. The couple neatly dressed and adorned in their best are blessed by the Brahmins assembled; and after a sumptuous supper, they are led to the nuptial chamber tastefully decorated, when certain Vedic texts are recited. After this the men withdraw from the chamber, leaving the couple alone. The bridal pair bathe early in the morning and drink a little of the water sanctified by a few Brahmins to become purified.

The guests are treated to sumptuous meals during that day and on the next morning. The conjugal pair are then invited to the girl's house where the guests assembled are well entertained.

The girl's parents, if of moderate means, spend about two hundred rupees or more for the Nuptials while those who can afford it spend twice or thrice the amount in the purchase of clothes for the married couple, vessels, bell-metal dish for taking food, bell-metal lamps and other articles for the domestic use, of a cot, bed, and other necessities varying with their means.

Valakāppu.—It is a non-*Sāstraic* ceremony performed during the fifth month of pregnancy, but is sufficiently binding on account of long usage. The pregnant woman is presented with new and bright china bangles as well as those made of silver and gold. Similar ones are presented to the girls who are invited. Female friends and relations are treated to a feast.

Pumsavanam and *Seemantham*.—In all essential particulars these do not differ from those performed by the Nambuthiris. But here also the girl's parents have to provide the bridal pair with decent dress and the bridegroom's parents with sweet-meats of various kinds.

Child-birth, Delivery rites.—When the pains of child birth begin for a woman, she is led to a special room, aided by her

mother and others, as also by a midwife. Soon after delivery the mother is given a mixture of Tippali (long pepper) and dried ginger fried, powdered and mixed with honey. A decoction of the same substances is prepared, and two or three spoonfuls of it are given during the next few days, after which a semi-liquid mass of medicine consisting of most of the drugs, ginger and long pepper is given her both in the morning and evening for forty days. There is now a tendency for the women to place themselves under the treatment of the practitioners and midwives trained in Medical Colleges, when they take the medicines and diets prescribed by them. The woman is subjected to a very sparing diet, boiled rice and pepper water for the first few days, and to a similar simple diet thereafter. The baby is fed on the first two days with a little of castor oil, a little palm sugar dissolved in it being given several times; and for the next few days with a little cow's milk and the same oil. After a week or two the baby feeds on the mother's milk for about two months. The mother bathes on the sixth day if she is not ill. The pollution lasts for ten days, and on the morning of the eleventh day, the room is cleaned and her garments washed; the mother and the baby are bathed, after which some Brahmins who are invited sanctify, with the recital of holy texts, a vessel of water with which the whole house, the mother and the baby are sprinkled. She is now only partially pure, and cannot enter the kitchen, nor can she, along with her husband, take part in the domestic ceremonies. She is subject to a further purification by a bath and sanctified water, after forty days. The baby feeds mainly on the mother's milk for a few months and along with it on a simple diet (sago rice powdered and boiled in milk) for a year or two.

All post-natal ceremonies such as *Jāthakarmam*, *Nāmakaranam*, *Annaprāsanam*, *Nishkramanam*, and *Tonsure* do not materially differ from those described according to the *Aswālayana Grihya Sūtras*. These are purificatory rites which are prescribed in all *Grihya Sūtras* and in the Code of Manu, for the purification of a man's whole nature, body, soul and spirit, from the taint transmitted through the womb of an earthly matter. In the generality of cases the first few *Samaskāras* are not performed at the special periods prescribed for each, but are in the cases of males postponed to *Upanayana*, and in the case of females to marriage.

Prajapathya, Soumya, Agneya and Vaiswadeva Vratas:
 —From a Vedic point of view, these four *Vratas*, expiatory ceremonies, are very important, but are now performed before marriage without comprehending the spirit and full significance of them. They are in fact performed after the completion of Vedic studies and before *Samavarthanam*. The Vedic student makes oblations of ghee into the fire, and offer libations of water mixed with gingelly seeds and rice, both at the beginning and at the completion of a portion of the Vedic study, to the *Rishi* whose work he has been studying for a year. Similarly, when he has studied the other three portions, *Agneyam*, *Soumyam* and *Vaiswadevam*, he makes similar oblations to the *Rishis* who are their authors. In ancient times, each *Vratam* lasted for a year; but it is now begun and completed on the forenoon of the auspicious day itself.

Samavarthanam.—In these days it is performed on the day of marriage or the day previous.

A man with one wife is the common rule, though in some cases he may have two. The marriage of a second wife is more often due to the absence of a son by the first wife, her illness or perverse temper, and when there are two wives to a man, very seldom has he any peace of mind on account of their quarrelsome nature. It is the first wife that joins the husband in all ceremonies.

When a woman is found to be going wrong and when it becomes public, she is generally excommunicated by the rest of the community.

Among Brahmans the sons inherit the property of their father. A typical Brahman family is generally patriarchal, and the father's authority is supreme, and his brothers junior to him and sons are obedient to him. His wife holds a corresponding position among the wives of the junior male members and daughters-in-law i.e., the wives of sons. The property is joint property and the earning members contribute to the general welfare of the joint family. The women rise early in the morning, attend to the domestic works, cleaning the house, vessels used for domestic purposes, etc., and then bathe; and after being neatly dressed, attend to the kitchen or other domestic work, prepare the dinner for the members of the family, dine after the males and children have taken their meals, and clean the cooking vessels. The males attend to their daily routine while the women take

Polygamy.

Adultery and Divorce.

Inheritance, Family and Social Organization.

some rest after dinner or chat with one another, and again after 4 P. M., they cook the food for supper, and the same routine is repeated. After supper they retire to bed. Thus most of their time is spent in attending to the family cuisine. Being unable to read and write, they do not follow any intellectual pursuits. Such joint families as described above hardly exist in these days. Except in very wealthy families the family property tends to disintegration either by partition, marriage of daughters or the education of sons. In that last case when the sons are able to earn, they shift for themselves and settle separately. The parents who have spent all the available funds for the good of their sons and daughters look to them for support in old age, and sometimes feel themselves disappointed.

The Brahmans in the Chittur Taluk reside in *grámams* (villages) or *Agraharams*, which are streets containing a single row or parallel rows of houses, with a temple and a tank attached to them. Their settlement in one group was in former times intended for mutual help. All affairs connected with the temple and the village in general, were managed by the elderly members who met together and deliberated upon them. Their verdict was always final. If any member misbehaved or committed any offence, he was made to appear before the meeting and justify his conduct. If he was found to be guilty, he was fined; and for aggravated cases the matter was placed before His Highness the Raja, whose decisions were always final. For all cases of adultery and the like, the culprits were placed under a ban. These old village organizations are fast disappearing, and nobody ever cares for them. In other places where they do not live together, they are no longer under any such influence.

The religion of the Tamil Brahmans (Smárthans) does not materially differ from that of the Nambuthiris, like whom they are unsectarians. In their daily religious observances or *Annikams* their general routine is more or less the same; but the difference consists in the latter following the rites as prescribed by the *Sruthis* and *Grihya Sutrás*, while the former follow the rules laid down by the *Smrithis* also in addition. Like the Nambuthiris, the early morning duties of the orthodox Tamil Brahmans are awakening, necessary washings and ablutions, sipping water or *Achamanam*, cleansing the teeth, bathing, *Tharpanam*, *Sandhya Vandanam* and *Japam*.



A GROUP OF TAMIL BRAHMAN STUDENTS WITH THEIR PANDITS.

(meditation). While bathing, the former recite no prayers except those relating to the sprinkling of water, but the latter repeat the following elaborate ones:—"I am about to perform morning ablution in this sacred stream or Ganges, Saraswathy, Yamuna and the Godavari, etc., in the presence of the Gods and Brahmins with a view to the removal of the guilt resulting from act, speech and thought, from what has been touched and untouched, known and unknown, eaten and not eaten, drunk and not drunk".¹ The next important act after wiping the body with a wet cloth, dressing in a silk cloth (*madi*), and putting on the marks on the forehead, chest, hands, characteristic of the sect, is the *Sandhya Vandānam*, which is a kind of thanks-giving service to Gods, when night and dawn meet in the morning and evening. Here again only the differences are noted. The act begins with the sipping of water (*Achamanam*) from the hollow of the right palm, which is done three times with the recital of the following names of Vishnu—*Achyuthayanamah*, *Ananthayanamah*, *Govindayanamah* (salutation be to Achyutha, Anantha and Govinda). Immediately, after the sipping, twelve parts of the body are touched with the fingers of the right hand in the following orders:—

1. The two cheeks with the thumb, repeating the names of Kesava and Narayana.
2. The two eyes with the ring finger repeating Madhava and Govinda.
3. The two sides of the nose with the forefinger repeating Vishnu and Madhusūdana.
4. The two ears with the little finger repeating Trivikrama and Vāmana.
5. The shoulders with the middle finger repeating Sridhara and Rishikēsa.
6. The chest and head with all the fingers repeating Padmanabha and Damodara.

This kind of Achamana is called *Puranachamana* (sipping of water according to Purāna).

After Achamana comes Prāṇāyāma, or holding in of vital breath, which consists in the repetition of the *Gāyatri* hymn and holding the breath by the three distinct operations of *Pūraka*, *Kumbhaka* and *Réchaka*. The suppression of breath is a preliminary *Yōga* practice and enables the performer to fix his mind on the Supreme Being who is meditated on.

The performer next repeats the *Sankalpa* (determination) with the hands brought together, the right palm over the left and placed on the right thigh. The efficacy of every religious act depends upon *Sankalpa* (strong determination or mental effort). If the mind is not thus concentrated and the act is done mechanically, the result is harmful to the performer. The meaning of the *Sankalpa* for the *Sandhya* service is as follows:—"I am worshipping for the removal of all my sins that have adhered to me and for the purpose of acquiring the favour of Narayana or Supreme Being." Then after the sprinkling of water with certain prayers, he takes up water in his right palm and drinks it repeating the following:—"May the sun and Manyu, the lord of anger, preserve me from the sins of pride and passion. Whatever the nightly sins of thought, word, deed, wrought by mind, my speech, my hands, my feet, wrought through my appetite and sexual organs, may the departing night remove them all. In thy immortal night, Oh Radiant Sun! I offer up myself and this guilt". At the evening service, the name is repeated with the word Agni instead of sun (Surya). At the midday service the following prayers are repeated:—"May the waters purify the earth by pouring down rain: May the earth thus purified by water purify me. May the water purify the teacher of the Vedas. May the Vedas, already pure, purify me; may the water expiate all my sins (such as eating forbidden foods or other sinful actions, if any, and purify me; then the sins of contact. For this purpose I offer myself." Then follows another sprinkling of water for external purification, which, along with the foregoing one, makes him fit to salute the deity in the rising luminary by what is called *Arghya*, which means the act of giving a handful of water on the ground or surface of water. The object of this offering with the recital of *Gáyatri mantra* is this:—From *Sankalpa* onwards the presence of the deity is conceived and invoked, and therefore the offering of water is made in honour of it. The idea is a little anthropomorphic, and shows that it must be a recent introduction. This *Arghya* should always be given facing the Sun.

After this, the performer sits for the *Gáyatri Japa* (the recital of the *Gáyatri* mantrams in an undertone), which is the most important part of the *Sandhya Vandanam* service. He sits in a peculiar posture (*Padmāsana*), reciting the name of

the *Rishi* who composed the *mantra* or the metre and repeats the *Chandas* (the name of the *Rishi* who composed the *mantra* or the metre) of each of the minor *mantras* of the major *mantras*, viz., OM, BHUH, etc. The *Sandhya Devata* is then formally invoked by a set of *mantras*, after which the *Japa* actually begins, when the celebrant considers himself thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the *Devata* whom he tries to identify in his heart. These Gayatri mantras should be repeated 108 or 28 times.

This is followed by *Pranayama* and *Sankalpa* for *Upastana*, which is of two kinds (1) *Gayatri-upastana* (2) *Surya-upastana*.

The former is a *mantra* which is intended to send back the *Sandhya Devata* which was previously invoked for purposes of meditation during *Japa*, while the latter *mantra* should be repeated facing the sun during morning and noon, and Varuna during evening respectively. Their translations are given below :—"The adorable glory of the sun God, who sustains all men (by causing rain), is eternal and most worthy of being adored with wonder. The sun, well knowing the inclinations of men, directs them to their various pursuits. The sun upholds both heaven and earth; the sun observes all creatures and their action without ever winking. To this eternal Being we offer oblations mixed with ghee. Oh, Sun! May that man who, through such sacrifice, offers oblations to thee, become endowed with wealth and plenty. He who is under thy protection is not cut off by untimely death; he is not vanquished by anybody, and sin has no hold on this man either from near or from afar". In the evening the following prayer to Varuna is offered :—*Evening Upastanam*—
"Hear O Varuna! this prayer of mine. Be gracious unto me, this day. I desire for thy protection, and cry to thee. I adore thee with prayer, I beg long life of thee. Therefore, O Varuna! without indifference in this matter take my prayer into kind consideration and do not cut off my life. Oh, Lord Varuna! Whatever offence we as men have committed against divine beings, whatever work of thine we have neglected through ignorance, do not destroy us all, O Lord, for all such sins. Whatever sins are attributed to us by our enemies as by gamblers at dice, whatever sins we may have committed and whatever we may have done through ignorance, do not destroy us, O! Lord, for all such sins. Then O! Lord, we shall become beloved of thee".

Midday Upastánam :—" The sun who is the cause of all actions comes on surrounding by the light of truth and a halo of resplendent beauty, vivifying all the human and divine existence and riding on a very pleasant chariot and looking down on the worlds. We contemplate on that Surya. Besides, looking on the divine light which is ever active in expelling darkness, we obtain the god among the Gods who is of the form of light. The rays bear the *Surya* (sun) by whose help everything in the world is known. The halo of rays of various colours equally in splendour, *Varuna* or *Mithras* or *Agni* or the eyes shine for the benefit of the world. The sun who is of the nature of *Atman*, fills in with his rays, the animal and non-sentient kingdoms, the heaven and the earth and the space between them. I devote myself to him for the fulfilment of my desire. We see for a hundred years the sun's orb which is beneficial to the Gods, which bestows every good, which is well-known, which is brilliant and clear on rising. By looking at it we live for a hundred years ; we enjoy happiness, with sons and others for a hundred years ; for a hundred years we remain in a place ; for a hundred years we hear pleasant words ; for a hundred years we speak good words, and for a hundred years we are unconquerable. We see the brilliant sun. May he who rises from the great ocean, who shines in the midst of the waters, whose rays are of the colour of the blood purify us. May the Great knower and the giver of all things purify us".

After this is the final prostration of the *Sandhya Dévata*, and this is followed by the recital of *Gótra*, *Sútra*, and the names of the person. The place where the *Japa* is performed is then sprinkled with water consecrated by the repetition of 'OM'.

This in brief is the *Sandhya* service of the Tamil Brahmins, and varies, as among the Nambuthiris, according to the Veda of the performer.

Pranavam.—This is the root of the Vedas and Mantras. Every Mantra is its manifestation more or less. It is said to be the root or the mother of the three Vedas, and every Vedic mantra should begin and end with it. It is made up of the three letters A. U. M. As to the real significance of these letters there are two interpretations—Vedic and Agamic.

According to the former, the Vedas invariably point out to OM as a symbol of *Parabrahmam* which is the cosmos. A represents the first manifestation, namely, *Vaisvánara* or Virát

the waking condition of the deity or *Taijasa* (~~signifies~~ *Hiranyagarbha*, the deity of the *Swapna Avasta* (dreamy state). *M* signifies *Pragna* or the *Sushupti Avasta* the condition of the *Logos* or *Iswara*). According to the latter *A* signifies *Parabrahma*, *U* means only, and *M* the *Jiva* or the individual ego¹."

After the morning *Sandhya* service *Brahma Yagna* or worship of the Supreme Being as prescribed in the *Grihya Sûtras* is gone through. The first hymn of the *Rig Vêda* is recited in detail, and then follow the first words of the *Yajur Vêda*, *Sâma Vêda*, *Atharvana Vêda* and *Niruktha*. This is followed by the *Tarpana* ceremony. These ceremonies above described should be performed by all Brahmins alike; but the daily *Devatârchana* or *Dêvata Puja* is performed generally by one of the members of the family. The Gods worshipped are *Siva* and *Vishnu* and their consorts *Parvati* and *Lakshmi*. Homage is paid to *Saligramam* stones or stone *lingams*. In every Brahmin house a special room or a corner is set apart for the worship of the Gods.

Panchâyatna Pûja—*Smârthâs* worship five stones, namely, 1. *Sâligramam* representing *Vishnu*, 2. *Bâna lingam* (a white stone) representing the essence of *Siva*, 3. a red stone (*Jasper*) representing *Ganapathy*, 4. a bit of metallic ore or a *Lingam* representing *Pârvathi* and *Siva*, and 5. a piece of pebble or crystal representing the *Sun*. The worship is begun by invoking the aid of *Ganapathy* or *Vigneswara*. Then a vessel filled with water, is placed before the stone, and the following prayer recited by the worshipper.—“In the mouth of the vessel of water live *Vishnu*, in the lower part *Brahma*, while the whole company of the mothers are congregated in its middle part”. He also invokes the *Ganges*, *Yamuna* or *Jamuna*, *Godavery*, *Saraswathi* and *Narmada* to be present in this water. A little of this water is poured into a conch-shell and adored with the recital of the following prayer:—“Oh Conch-shell! thou wert produced in the sea and art held by *Vishnu* in his hand. Thou art worshipped by all the Gods. Accept this homage.” After performing similar *Pujas* to *Atma* (soul) and to the seats (*pidham*), of the deities, the bell is worshipped by the following prayers:—“Oh, Bell! make the sound for the approach of the Gods and departure of the demons. Homage to the bell.” The worshipper claps hands and rings the bell. All *tulasi* leaves, flowers,

and sandal paste used for worship on the previous days are removed. The sixteen acts of homage (Shódasôpachârana) are next performed in due order, namely,

1. Avâhanam (Invocation of the Gods).
2. Asanam (seat).
3. Pâdyam (water for washing the feet).
4. Arghyam (oblation of rice and water).
5. Achamanam (water for sipping).
6. Snânam (bath).
7. Vastram (clothing of Tulasi leaves).
8. Upavastram (upper clothing).
9. Gandham (sandal paste).
10. Pushpam (flowers).
11. Dhûpam (incense).
12. Dhipam (light).
13. Naivedyam (offering of food).
14. Pradakshinam (circumambulation).
15. Mantra pushpam (throwing of flowers).
16. Namaskâram (salutation by prostration).

The five stones are bathed or washed with the recital of the Purusha Suktha hymns, and then wiped with a piece of cloth. The last nine hospitable rites are then performed, and the Dêva puja is thus brought to a close. The other important ceremonies are the noon *Sandhya* and the *Vaiswadeva* ceremonies, after which the male members of the family take their meals. The orthodox Brahman takes some rest and then reads Purânas—Râmayanam and Bâratam. He performs the evening Sandhya service, and makes some *Japams* or recites the names of Siva or Vishnu. He then goes to his supper at 8 P. M., and after an hour or two retires to bed.

These then are the daily religious observances of the Tamil Brahmans with slight variations in different directions and even among families. The *Sandhya* service is in fact of two types, Vaidika and Tantrika, and as now performed, does not represent the oldest form in accordance with *Taittiriya Brahmana* and the early *Smritis*. The *Arghyapradana* (offering of water to the sun and the meditation on the recitation of Gayatri) are the old and essential parts of the ceremony; and to them alone the Nambuthiris, as distinguished from the other classes of Brahmans, conform even now. The latter have received additions from Purânas and other sources.

The worship of the deities in temples by the Tamil Brahmins does not, in any way, differ from that of the Nambuthiris.

The daily observances described above are practised by very few orthodox Brahmins, while a very large majority are absolutely ignorant of them. The modern conditions of life, the struggle for existence which necessitates them to enter into various occupations for their livelihood and the system of modern education, which Brahmin children and young men receive in school and Colleges, prevent them from obtaining any knowledge of religious observances in their early days. The Sandhyā service which every Brahmin has to perform is either forgotten or wilfully neglected by many, and their worship of the deities in temples is also a matter of indifference. The special holy days in honour of the worship of certain deities become days of festivities in which the people indulge in eating. There is thus a tendency for the young men of these days to be somewhat irreligious; and a real awakening in this direction is very necessary.

The Tamil Brahmins take part in the worship of Siva, Vishnu, their consorts, and their manifestations in the temples of the State. They very much frequent these sacred edifices dedicated to Gods and Goddesses; and their adoration does not materially differ from that of the Nambuthiris already described.

Brahmins generally have a long list of holidays, and festivals qualified by fasts (*Upavāsams* and *Vritams*), intended not as a 'penitential exercise', but as a means for the accumulation of merit. Even old age, infirmity and sickness are not exempted from their non-observance. In most cases, they have to perform special *pūjās* and ceremonies, after which alone meals can be taken and that at a late hour. The following is a list of the fasts, feasts and festivals in vogue among the Tamil Brahmins.

Ekadasi.—Every orthodox Brahmin fasts on the eleventh day after full-moon or new-moon, and on this day he gives himself up wholly to religious observances such as the recital of mantras and perusal of holy texts. He keeps awake at night, and on the next morning *Dwadasi* (twelfth day) he performs a *pūja* and feeds at least one Brahmin before breakfast.

New-moon or Amāvāsyā :—This is a very important day of religious ceremony, and every Brahman performs *tharpana* or libation of water and *tilam* (gingelly) for the manes of the departed ancestors. He takes only a single meal that day.

Mahālaya Amāvāsyā :—The new-moon day in the month of Bhādrapāda is held specially sacred.

Makara Sankranthi :—It is held sacred because of the Sun's northern course (Uttarāyana) in the Heavens. On the same day, a festival called *pongal* takes place, when cattle are decorated with garlands, and their horns coloured, and mango leaves hung round their necks. The festival is intended for the glorification of agriculture.

Thye Pūyam :—This festival which falls on the asterism of Pooyam in Makaram (January-February) is sacred to Subrahmanya, and special offerings are made in all Sivite temples and in those dedicated to Subrahmanya.

Eclipses :—The Solar and Lunar eclipses are considered by the Brahmans to be very sacred. At the beginning of an eclipse every Brahman bathes, and those who have no parents, perform *tharpana* (libations of water with gingelly seeds), after which they spend some time in the recital of Gāyatri and other mantrams, for they are believed to be very effective, if recited during that period. A kind of pollution is observed during the period of an eclipse, and a bath at the end is necessary to be free from it. If the Sun or Moon sets before the close of it, there is fasting for the whole night or day, and the fast is broken only after they are seen next free from it. Pregnant women shut themselves in a closed room, for their presence outside is believed to cause some deformity or death to the child in the womb. No *puja* is performed in a temple to any deity during this unholy period.

Maha Sivaratri :—"Great Siva's night". This takes place on the 14th day of the dark half of *Magha* about the middle or end of February. A fast is observed during the day, and a vigil kept during night, when Siva is worshipped.

Sri Rama Navami The Birthday of Ramachandra :—This is observed on the 9th of the light half of *Medom* (March-April).

Gokulashtami or (**Sri Jayanti**) :—This falls on the eighth day after the full-moon in the month of *Sravana*, the day on which Sri Krishna was born. The devotee fasts during the

day, and after the performance of púja and perusal of *Bhagavata Purana*, partakes of a light refreshment after midnight.

Vinayaka Chathurthi.—This occurs in the month of Bhadrápáda and is in honour of Vignêswara, the remover of all obstacles. A clay image of the deity and one of a mouse are made, duly consecrated and worshipped in every house.

Sravanam or *Upakarmam*.—This generally falls in the month of Srávana for the followers of Rig and Yajur Vêdas; but the followers of Sâma Vêda perform it on the asterism of Hastha in the month of Bhadrápáda. On this auspicious day the Brahman removes his sacred thread (*puníl*). The Brahman-charis get themselves shaved in the morning, and all the Brahmans young and old assemble in the village temple by the side of a tank or river, where after a purificatory bath and worship of the *Saptarishis*, the sacred thread is removed. This is followed by a *tharpana* (libation of water to the Rishis and *pitris* or departed ancestors.) The ceremony is brought to a close by presents to the priest and a grand feast in the family.

Navaratri.—This is a nine days' festival held in the month of Kannî, beginning from the day next after Mahalaya Amavasya. In every house a special room is decorated, and in it are placed all kinds of toys and fancy articles; and in the evening, the women of the household assemble in the room, when songs are sung in praise of the Goddess Saraswathi. On the 9th day *Puja* and *Naivedyam* are offered to religious manuscripts and books, which are collected and kept together in a conspicuous place, and the Goddess of learning who represents them is then worshipped. The Brahman women of the village or of the neighbourhood are invited to the house of one another in the evening. On the last day, that is, the tenth day, *Vijaya Desami*, the children are for the first time initiated into the study of the alphabet. The artisan classes offer puja to the tools and implements used by them in the exercise of their professions.

Dipavali.—This is an important festival, which falls on the 14th day of the dark fort-night in the month of Thulam, the day on which Sri Krishna destroyed the cruel demon Narakâsura who ruled the earth and oppressed the people. The chief observance of the festival is an oil bath early in the morning, and men, women and children dress themselves in new garments and take light refreshments. The children delight in the letting of crackers off of various designs.

Kārtthikai:—This falls in the month of Vrischikam (November-December), and one important feature of this festival is the grand display of lights in every house.

Ardradersanam or Thiruvāthira festival—This is held in Dhanu (December-January) and is sacred to Siva. It is a ten days' festival ending with the asterism of Ardra in all important temples of the East Coast.

Besides the feasts, fasts, and festivals described above there are certain *Vratams* (vows) for which certain ceremonies are performed, either by the women alone or by the women along with their husbands, as directed by the Brahman priests.

The most important of them are given below:—

Somavara Vratam:—This is observed by the women every Monday. They fast during the day, and after their bath in the evening adore Siva with offerings. They then take their supper. This Vratam, which is observed to enjoy a happy conjugal life is brought to an end with a grand celebration at the end of two years and four months.

Pradōsha Vratam:—This is observed on every thirteenth day after full or new-moon by the wife and husband conjointly with a hope of being free from poverty. They bathe early in the morning, adore Siva, and fast during the day; and after their bath in the evening perform pujas to Siva and his consort with the offerings of flowers and *Naivedyams* (cocoanuts, plantain fruits). They then take their supper. This Vratam is brought to a close with a grand celebration at the end of a year.

Varalakshmi Vratam:—This comes about in the month of Srāvana. It is observed by women who have their husbands living, and its performance is believed to ensure a happy conjugal life. The women bathe early in the morning, and cleaning a copper or brass vessel, coats it with chunam, draws a figure of Lakshmi on it, and decks it with jewels. A *tali* is tied round the neck of the vessel and cocoanut coloured yellow with powdered turmeric is placed over it on a bunch of mango leaves covering its mouth. Puja is then performed, and offerings of sweet meats, cakes and fruits made. The woman then invokes the blessings of the Goddess for the long life and prosperity of her husband.

Rishi Panchami Vratam:—The following purānic story is mentioned in this connection. The divine King Indra killed

Vrithrásura, a giant; and thereby committed the sin of man-slaughter. To be free from the sin, he distributed it among the earth, water, trees and women. The monthly course of the women is ascribed to this sin; and to purify themselves from this, the women observe this *Vratam* on the fifth day after New-moon in the month of *Srávana*.

When a Brahman is about to die, gifts of twenty-eight things are made to Brahman *Vaidiks*. Divine names such as those of Rama and Krishna are recited, and a few chapters of *Bhagavat Gita* are also read by a priest. The body of the dying man is smeared with holy ashes (*Bhasmam*), and a necklace of tulasi beads or *Rudraksham* is put round his neck. After his death the corpse is laid on a cushion made of grass placed on the floor with the head towards the south. Vedic prayers (*Karnamantram*) are whispered into the ears of the dying man, and the gift of a cow is also made at the time in order that the spirit may easily pass out of the dead body. His wife, sons and daughters go out of the house to prostrate towards the south, which is believed to be presided over by Yama, and then return inside. The chief mourner and his brothers bathe and return home, with a vessel of water, while one of his daughters, sister, or a daughter-in-law brings a vessel of water after their bath and wash the corpse. It is neatly dressed and caste marks are put on the forehead, chest and hands; and tulasi leaves are thrown over and around it by the son. As a Brahman is supposed to have his *Aupasanagni* (fire) by his side, that fire is lighted. If the death happens during night, any day after the full-moon and before the new-moon a day in *Dakshinayanam* or during any five days after the asterism *Avittam* some expiatory ceremonies are performed. If the dead man is one that has not bathed in the Ganges during his life time, a few Brahmins are engaged, and they bathe and sprinkle water on the corpse in the belief that by so doing, he is bathed in the holy water. Some members, especially *Sapindas* of the deceased's, family carry the corpse, covered with a winding sheet, on a bamboo bier, to the cremation ground, making offerings to the minor deities on the way. The women of the family burst into lamentations, and when the corpse has reached the cremation ground, the chief mourner sprinkles some water thereon, and throws a quarter of an anna

on it as an equivalent of the purchase of the ground for cremation. The sacred fire is lighted, and the right palm of the corpse is rubbed with a gold coin. Ghee is dropped into its nine openings, and rice thrown over it and put into its mouth. The son takes a burning brand from the sacred fire, and leaves it on the chest, looking at the sun; he then carries a pot of water with a hole at the bottom, through which water trickles out over his shoulders, three times round the pyre and at the third round dashes it. Then all his relations squat on the ground facing the east, and taking up some *Kusa* grass and cutting it into small fragments scatter them in the air, after the recital of some holy texts.

Once more they sprinkle themselves with water and go to a tank for a bath. The Brahmans assembled to attend the funeral are given some *Dakshina* (gifts). The chief mourner and his brothers, if any, get themselves shaved, bathe, and after their return home perform two ceremonies, *Nagna Srádha* and *Pàshàna Stàpanam* (placing the stone). The disembodied spirit is believed to be naked after the burning of the dead body, and therefore to provide it with a body, offerings of water, rice, a piece of cloth, a lamp and a few annas are given to a Brahman. Two stones, one on the bank of a river, and the other at home, are set up to represent the spirit of the departed. For ten days the chief mourner and his brothers, if any, bathe early morning perform the *Sandhya* service, and make libations of water (*Vàsodakam*) by dipping in water a piece of cloth from the winding sheet and rinsing it over the stone placed on the riverside. A libation of water mixed with gingelly seeds (*Thilôdakam*) is also made to it. These offerings are likewise given to the stone set up in the house, along with the balls of cooked rice, which are afterwards thrown in water. A kind of *Vridhi Srâdham* is also performed, and this consists of an offering of a measure of rice, vegetables and a few annas to three Brahmans on the first day, four on the second day, five on the third and thus increased up to the tenth day. A similar *Srâdha* known as *Nava Srâdha* is also performed on the odd days with similar offerings. The collection of bones, called *Sanchayanam*, takes place either on the second, fourth, or the sixth day, and the bones are collected in an earthen vessel, buried underground or thrown into the water. A figure of the dead man is made of the ashes, and on its mouth is placed a vessel

of water with a hole made on the side, and also a ball of cooked rice. On the tenth day the agnates get shaved, bathe and make libations of water to the departed spirit. The mourners also make the offering as usual. The latter along with the agnates return home, and offer libations of water and balls of cooked rice, after which a large quantity of cooked rice, bread, etc., (*Prabhūtha bali*), is offered to the spirit of the departed, which is believed to be very hungry then. The food is heaped up in a very large plantain leaf, and all near relations go round it, weeping and beating their breasts. This is mostly done by the women, while the men stand aloof. The agnates, taking the stones set up, start in procession with the mourners to the tank or river, and throw the offerings and stones into the water. The widow of the deceased is also conducted to the riverside, and after her bath, she is presented with new garments by the son, brother and relations. The sons get shaved. The agnates and the chief mourner all bathe, and the latter perform a *Hómam* (*Ananda hómam*) in the presence of the former. By this ceremony and by taking a dose of sanctified water they become pure, and then return home, taking a little of this fire. On the eleventh day the members of the family bathe, and the sons or the chief mourners perform their usual *Sandhya* service, invite a few Brahmins to prepare the sanctified water with which the whole house, well, cowshed, vessels, etc., are sprinkled to become purified. All the members drink a little of it and become purified. A bull calf, branded on one side of it, is let loose, so as to set the spirit of the departed free from the *Prétha* stage. On the eleventh day, a *Srādha* called *Ekoddishtam* is performed in the fire itself, and then a Brahmin who is seated to represent the *Prétha* of the dead person is fed after going through the *Srādha* rites. The balls of cooked rice offered at the time are thrown into the water, and the members of the family again bathe and drink a little of the sanctified water.

No *Aváhana* (invocation) takes place in this ceremony, nor the oblation of cooked rice into the fire, nor do *Vaisawdevas* take part in it.¹ *Ekoddishtha Srādhas* are completed by the performance of *Sapindakaranam*, the reception of the *Prétha* into the community of *Pitris*. If these ceremonies should be properly performed, the subtle parts of the offerings made during their performance feed the deceased till he goes

1. *Sankhayana Grihya Sūtras*, IV, 2-5.

to *Pitriloka* (world of the manes). The mantras facilitate his passage thereto, and he takes a place among the *Pitris*. The *Sapindikakaranam*, takes place on the twelfth day, but should, according to the *Sāstras*, be performed only a year after death, i. e., on the completion of all the *Masikas* or monthly *Srāddhas*. Now a ceremony called *Shōdasam* (the sixteen) is performed just before it on the twelfth day, and this consists in giving presents of money and vessels to the Brahmins. On the thirteenth day, the house is purified with sanctified water when twelve Brahmin *Vaidiks* are invited to perform *Graha Yajnam* (propitiation of the nine planets). After this worship a feast is given to the relatives and friends. During the night of the same day, some verses called *Charama Sloka* in honour of the dead man are composed and read by a Sanskrit Pandit. Every month for a year after death in a family, *Sradha* is performed as described in the following pages. Those who can afford it, go to Benares and Gaya, where they perform a similar ceremony, which renders the performance of the rites not obligatory thereafter.

Sradha Ceremonies :—*Sradha* means an oblation of grain, water or other substances, offered with faith. The performance of the *Sradha* by a son is necessary to deliver a father from the Hell called *Put*¹, whence 'the son' is called *Put-tra* the rescuer from "*Put*". Hence it is that every Brahmin, in fact, every Hindu desires to have a son and not a daughter. *Sradha* is held to be auspicious, and it is performed for the benefit of a dead person who has received an intermediate body and became a *Pitri* or beatified father. Both in the funeral and *Sradha* ceremonies offerings of the balls of rice and libations of water have to be made with the recital of the Védic texts and prayers. In the former the above mentioned offerings are for the nourishment of the ghost and the formation of the body as a vehicle, whereas in the latter they are offered as an act of homage to the spirit with the body so formed. It is also plainly said in Manu II, 1-137, and elsewhere that the embodied *Pitris* require periodical offerings of *Pinda* and water for their continual nourishment and refreshment. *Sradha* is not always connected with funerals. According to the Vishnu Purana (III-13) a *Grihastha* or householder should worship the manes at the marriage of a son or daughter, on entering a

1. Manu, Chapter IX—138.

new building, on naming a child and on other similar auspicious occasions. Nirṇaya Sindhu makes mention of twelve different kinds of *Srādhās*, of which *Nithya* (daily or constant), *Naimittika* ('special', performed on special occasions), *Vridhi* (for the increase of prosperity), *Sapindana* and *Parvana* *Srādhās* are the most important. A short account of each of them is given below.

1. *Nithya Srādha* is one which consists in giving food to a Brahman, after offering it to three ancestors by name, with the usual preparatory vows and prayers, and with the formality of placing three blades of grass as a seat for each ancestor, but using a single prayer only for the invocation of the manes and omitting the ceremony of welcoming them with an *arghya*. It is a short method of performing the ceremony.

2. *Naimittika Srādha* is that which is performed on special occasions as at funerals, and refers to one person (*Ekōddishtam*) recently dead. Only one man is feasted at the end of the rite. *Srādhās* performed in holy places during eclipse, on the first day of Karkadakam, Thulam, Makaram, and Medam, and *Mahalaya Srādhās* come under this division.

3. *Vridhi Srādha* :—The obsequies for the increase of prosperity, as the term *Vridhi Srādha* signifies, are celebrated previous to the solemnization of a marriage, or of any of the ceremonies which, according to the notions of the Hindus, contribute to the regeneration of a twice-born man, that is, of Brāhmana, Kshatriya or Vaisya. This *Srādha* is likewise performed at the commencement and close of a solemn fast.

4. *Sapindana Srādha* :—This is performed for the benefit of the deceased to enable him to join his ancestors or *Sapindas*, who are connected by the offering of the *Pindas*.

A cow is then usually presented to a Brahman, and this gift is believed to render the crossing of the river *Vaitarani*—river of death—easy for the departed soul. The gift of a boat, cow, and the beddings, and twenty-eight other articles is also made to the Brahman at the time. The *arghya* water of the *Prētha* is combined with that of the *Pitris*, and an elongated mass of cooked rice is placed between the two rows and divided with blades of grass in three portions which are arranged close to the balls of rice. This is regarded as

uniting the dead man with his ancestors. Gifts of a few annas are made to each of the Brahmans assembled there then. The two Brahmans representing the *Vaiswadevas* and *Pitris* are given betel leaves and a few rupees each, and the members of the family go round and prostrate before them, when after bestowing their blessings on them they depart. The rice ball offerings are thrown into the water. After these the house is swept and cleaned, and all the members of the family again bathe and drink a little of the sanctified water to become purified. They wear the holy thread as on the previous day. At the last obsequies for one recently deceased, which is named the *Sapindana*, the following prayer is recited when the riceball which has been offered to him is piled up with the rest ; " May the mansion of those progenitors, who have reached a common abode and who have accordant minds, foster him ; may the blessed sacrifices sacred to the Gods be his." The subjoined prayer is likewise peculiar to the *Sapindana*. " By (the intercession of) those souls who are mine by affinity, who are animated, (shades) who have reached a common abode, who have accordant minds, may prosperity be mine in this world for a hundred years ".

After smearing the place with cowdung a square altar of sand is raised on it, one or two fingers high, and nearly a span in length and breadth. It must be triangular at the obsequies of one recently dead. The person who performs the ceremony first washes his hands and feet, sips water and puts a ring of kusa grass on the ring finger of the right hand. He sits down on the cushion of kusa grass, or of other materials placed upon a blade of such grass. He lights a lamp, reciting a prayer which will be cited further on. He places the implements and materials in regular order and sprinkles water on himself and all around, meditating on Vishnu, sur-named the Lotus-eyed, and revolving in his mind the couplet. " Whether pure or defiled, etc." He now shifts the sacerdotal thread to his right shoulder and solemnly declares his intention of performing a *Śrādhā*, and the motive of it. He thrice meditates *Gāyatri*, and pronounces the salutation to superior beings, " Salutation to the Gods, to the manes of ancestors ".

After this preparation, he proceeds to invite and welcome the *Vaiswadevas*, *Pitris*, *Vishnu* and the manes. First he places two little cushions of kusa grass on one side of the altar for the *Vaiswadevas*, and three in front of it for the *Pitris*. Each cushion should consist of three blades of grass folded up. After strewing kusa grass on these cushions, he says, "Shall I invoke the *Vaiswadevas*?" Being told "Do so", he thus invokes them "*Vaiswadevas*! hear my invocation, come and sit on this holy grass". After scattering barley on the same spot, he meditates this prayer "*Vaiswadevas*! listen to my invocation. Ye, who reside in this sky and ye who abide near us, (on earth) or (far off), in Heaven". "Ye whose tongues are fire, and ye, who defend the funeral sacrifice sit on this grass and be cheerful". He then invites the manes of the ancestors with similar invocations "O Fire! zealously we support thee; zealously we feed thee with fuel; eagerly dost thou call our willing ancestors to taste our oblations". "May our progenitors who eat the moon-plant, who are sanctified by holy fire, come by paths, which Gods travel. Satisfied with ancestral food at this solemn sacrifice may they applaud and guard us". He next welcomes the Gods and manes with oblations of water in vessels made of leaves, two are presented to the *Vaiswadevas*, and three to paternal ancestors and as many to maternal ancestors. Kusa grass is put into each vessel and water sprinkled on it, while the prayer—"May divine waters be auspicious to us," etc., is recited. Barley is thrown into the vessels intended for the *Vaiswadevas*, and *tila* (sisamum) into those intended for the manes of ancestors, with these prayers:—"Barley! thou art the separator, separate us from our natural enemies and from our malicious foes. 2. Thou art *tila*, sacred to Soma." At a *Srāgha* for the increase of prosperity which is performed on many occasions as a preparation for a solemn act of religion, barley is thrown into the vessels instead of *tila*, and the last prayer is thus varied. "Thou art barley, sacred, to Soma; framed by the divinity thou dost produce celestial bliss; mixed with water mayst thou long satisfy with nourishment my several progenitors whose mouths are full of blessings". The vessels are successively taken up by the celebrant who repeats each time a prayer before recited:¹ "The water in

1. The Religious Ceremonies of the Hindus and of the Brahmins. Asiatic Researches, Vol. VII, pages 232—285.

Heaven, in the atmosphere and on the earth, have been united with milk, etc."

The kusa grass that lay in the vessel is put into a Brahman's hand, and that which was under it is held by the person who performs the *Srādha* in his own hands, and through it he successively pours the water out of each vessel on the Brahman's hand. He then piles up the empty vessels in three sets, and reverses them, saying, while he oversets the first, "Thou art a mansion for ancestors".

The person who performs the *Srādha* next takes up rice smeared with clarified butter and makes two oblations to fire, reciting these prayers—"May this oblation to fire which conveys the offerings to the manes be efficacious". The Brahmans are then presented with new garments, sandal paste, flowers, etc.

The Brahmans should be fed with the residue of the oblation. It is accordingly consecrated for that purpose by the following prayer:—"The vessel that holds thee is the earth; its lid is sky; I offer you this residue of an oblation, similar to ambrosia, in the undefiled mouth of a priest; may this oblation be efficacious". The performer of the *Srādha* then points with his thumb towards the food, saying, "Thrice did Vishnu step, etc". He adds, "May the demons and giants that sit on this consecrated spot be dispersed." He meditates the *Gayatri* with the names of the worlds, and sweetens the food with honey or sugar, saying, "May winds blow sweet", etc. He then distributes the food among the Brahmans; and when they have eaten and have acknowledged that they are satisfied, he gives them water to rinse their mouths.

He now proceeds to offer the funeral cakes consisting of balls or lumps of cooked rice mixed with clarified butter. He offers three to the paternal and more to the maternal ancestors. The prayers "Ancestors! rejoice, take your respective shares," and the form of the oblation has been already mentioned. It is only necessary to add in this place that he wipes his hands with kusa grass in honour of remoter ancestors, who thus became partakers of the oblations.

In the next place, he makes six oblations of water from the palm of his hands, with salutation to the seasons. "Salutation unto you, O Fathers! and unto the saddening seasons," etc. By this prayer, the manes of ancestors are

doubly saluted ; for the Veda declares, "The six seasons are the progenitors of mankind."

A thread is placed on each funeral cake to serve as apparel for the manes, and each time the same words are repeated, "Fathers! This apparel is offered unto you." Flowers, perfumes and similar things are added at pleasure, but water must be sprinkled on each cake with the prayer, "Waters! Ye are the food of our progenitors".

The performer of the *Sradha*, then takes up the cake in the middle and smells it ; or his wife eats it, if they be solicitous for male offspring. In this case, the following prayer must be recited :—"Grant, O Progenitors ! the conception of a male child (long lived and healthy, and the like), the lotus and garland (or twins that sprung from Aswini) ; so that, at this season there may be a person (to fulfil the wishes of the Gods, of the manes, and of human beings)"¹. He then takes up the cakes, successively smells them, and throws them into a vessel and gives away the food to a mendicant priest or to a cow, or else casts it into the waters.

He then dismisses the manes, with presents of betel leaves, nuts, and a few annas saying, "Fathers! to whom food belongs, guard our food and the other things offered by us, venerable and immortal as ye are and conversant with the holy truths. Quaff the sweet essence of it, be cheerful, and depart contented by the paths which Gods travel". Lastly, he walks round the spot and leaves it, saying, "May the benefit of this oblation accrue to me repeatedly ; may the Gods of the earth and the Goddesses of the sky whose form in the universe visit me with present and future happiness. Father and mother, revisit me when I again celebrate the obsequies. Soma, king of the manes ; visit me for the sake of (conferring) immortality."²

A *Sradha* is thus performed with an oblation of three funeral cakes only to three male paternal ancestors on such occasions ; or with as many funeral oblations to three maternal ancestors on others. Sometimes separate oblations are also presented to their wives of the paternal ancestors. Thus at the monthly *Sradhas* celebrated on the day of new moon,

1. The Religious Ceremonies of the Hindus and of the Brahmins.

2. Asiatic Researches, Vol. VII, pages 232-25.)

six funeral cakes are offered to three paternal and as many maternal male ancestors with their wives; on most other occasions, separate oblations are presented to the female ancestors. At the obsequies celebrated in the first half of Aswina, on the day entitled *Mahálaya*, funeral cakes are separately offered to every deceased friend and near relation; thus, immediately after offering the oblations to ancestors a cake is presented to a deceased wife, then to a son or daughter, to a brother or sister, to an uncle or aunt, to a father-in-law, to a preceptor, and lastly to a friend. The same is observed at the obsequies performed on the day of an eclipse, or upon a pilgrimage to a holy spot, and especially to Gaya. This kind of *Sradha* is called a *Pàrvana Sràdha*, which is performed at new moon and at other periods of the moon's changes.

Besides the ceremonies described above, there are other customs in vogue among the Tamil Brahmans. There cannot be any cooking in the house of the deceased; and the chief mourner and the nearest relatives are fed during the days of pollution with the food cooked in a neighbouring house either at the mourners' own expense or at the expense of the husbands of the daughters, grand-daughters, or the parents of the daughters-in-law of the deceased. In wealthy families, the funeral festivities are very grand and provide for the feeding of a large number of Brahmans.

In the case of the death of an aged member in a Brahman's family, a kind of weird dance by the female members, their relatives and neighbours is got up at nine o'clock at night from the second or third day, and continued till the tenth. The women collect together and perform a circular dance, singing special funeral songs, and beating on their uncovered bosoms; and finally mimic loud lamentations. This is continued till the tenth day, when a similar gathering takes place for the same purpose, after which they go in procession to the neighbouring tank or river, with their tresses of hair dishevelled and with their arms on each others shoulders, and return home in the same manner after their bath. The chief mourners and their close relatives are treated to a grand feast at the expense of the daughter's husband of the deceased or the parents of his daughter-in-law.

The funeral songs above referred to are said to have been composed by an old Tamil poet, and they are learned by the girls and young women along with the wedding and other songs. A woman should at least know one song about her grand parents, parents, brothers and sisters, husband, children, father and mother-in-law. It is not likely that these lamentations really express any genuine feelings in the hearts of the mourners; but the custom implies that such feelings are held in some estimation.

On the morning of the eleventh day, the woman whose husband is dead has her head completely shaved, and becomes a widow thereafter. **Tonsure of widows.** She remains in seclusion for a year, and wears white cloths for the rest of her life. Henceforth her status in society is one of degradation, and she cannot take part in any of the domestic ceremonies, such as weddings, nuptials and the like. Of all kinds of calamities or misfortunes that can happen to a woman, widowhood involving the loss of hair is considered to be the greatest.

The rules regarding the conduct of widows are like those regulating the conduct of *Sanyâsis* (ascetics). "Eating on metal plates, sleeping on the cot, chewing betel leaves (*thâmbula*), use of flowers, perfumes, etc., are all denied to the *Yati* and the widow alike. To all who are in a *Vrata*, the purification is like the *Yatis* and so for the widow"¹. Thus the sages have prescribed to the faithful widow a number of duties, the keynote of which is austerity.

It is interesting to enquire in this connection whether there is any religious sanction for the tonsure of widows. There are passages in the *Rig Vêda* which bear testimony to the fact that the preservation of hair on the woman's head adds to her beauty.¹ *Atharvanâ Vêda* contains charms to stimulate and promote the growth of hair. "In order to strengthen the old hair, to beget the new, to render more luxurious that which has grown, the all healing plant, *Nitâni* in one of the remedial rites is prescribed in that *Vêda* for the growth of hair². That plant was brought, it is said, by Jamadagni from the abode of Asita, for promoting the growth of hair of his daughter. It has the power to strengthen the roots, lengthen

1. R. V. I., II-1-5, VI.-55-2, IX.-67-11.

2. A. V. VI.-21.

the ends and expand the middle. Thus from ancient times the hair was prized as an aid to beauty.

The authorities for the tonsure of widows are very few. In the early Law Books, or Smrithis, of Apasthambha, Gautama, Vasishta, and Yagnavalkya, and in the Mahabharata, there is no mention of the custom. The widows then dressed the hair without the parting line or did not deck the hair. The only authorities in which mention is made of shaving, are the *Skānda Purāna* and *Vyāsa Smṛithi*.

In all probability the custom has originated from the shaving of Buddhistic Nuns.

The Brahmans were, by Sastras, required to teach the

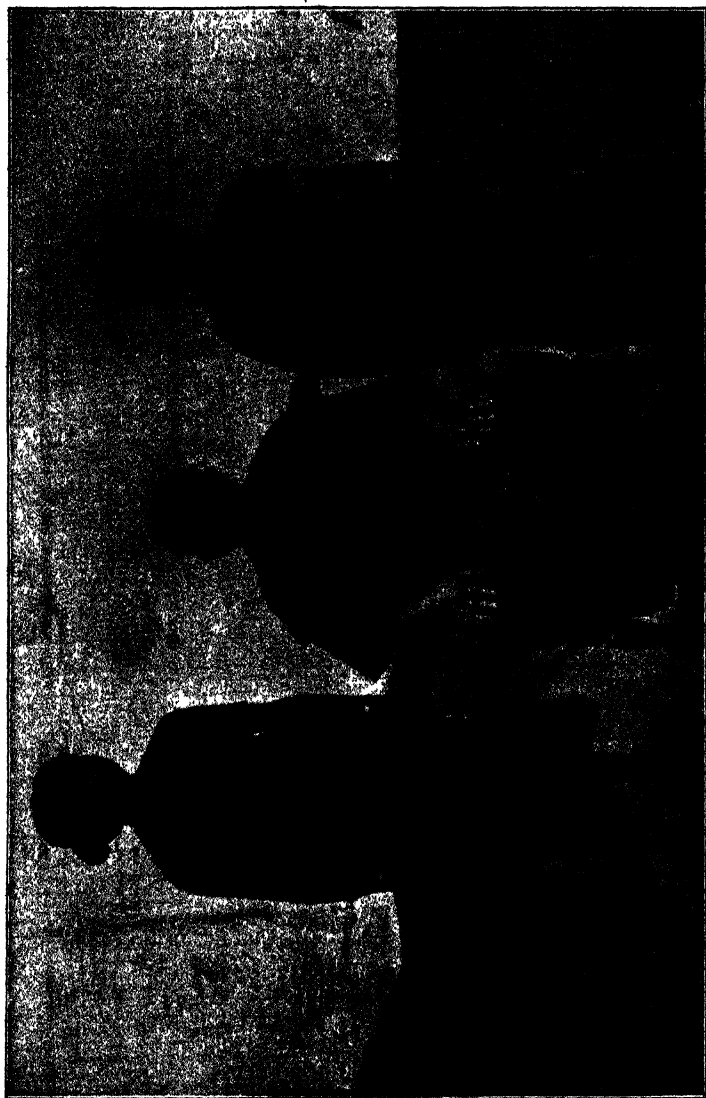
Occupation.

Vedas, to look after the training and preservation of the moral, social and religious principles of the people, to perform and preside over the religious and sacrificial ceremonies, and also to aid rulers in the administration of justice. These duties were, in after times, discharged by some among them known as *Vaidiks*, while others called *Loukikas* were engaged in other occupations. At present, the priestly class of Brahmans and others proficient in the study of Sastras have, owing to the absence of sufficient encouragement, diminished in numbers, while others engage themselves in all occupations which afford decent income for their livelihood. The study of the *Védas* and *Sastras* is, in point of money earning, less popular among them, and its place is being taken up by western education. Brahman children, boys and young men, are being educated in all schools and Colleges, and take advantage of the instructions imparted in them; so that they form a conspicuous majority in the ranks of the literates. As in other districts, they are employed in all departments of Government service. Many are merchants, bankers, cultivators, and the like.

The Brahmans are strict vegetarians and teetotallers. Rice is

Food.

the chief article of food, and other grains such as pulse, black, green, and Bengal gram, and dhol are largely used in their daily meal. Milk, ghee, curds and butter milk are also used at every meal. All kinds of vegetables with the exception of onions and potatoes are freely used. Orthodox Brahmans have their dinner between eleven and twelve o'clock in the morning and supper at eight P. M.



THREE TAMIL BRAHMIANS

with a lunch consisting of some bread and hot water seasoned with coriander, cumin and other seeds. Children and very young men and women have their break-fast, which consists of rice boiled during the previous night and mixed with water. A small quantity of this rice with butter milk and pickles is consumed at 8 A. M., and 4 P. M. in addition to their regular dinner and supper. An innovation has however taken place in this direction. Coffee or tea with bread has taken the place of cold rice and butter milk in the morning and evening.

The Tamil Brahmins form one division of the representatives in Southern India of the Aryan race, and have all the characteristics peculiar to the Aryan type. Partly owing to the influence of fusion and interminglings during the long lapse of time with the Dravidian population, some of the characteristics of the latter are found among them : and yet they can be distinguished from the rest of the community by their fair complexion and other physical and mental characters. Sir Herbert Risley considers the Brahmins of Southern India as belonging to the Aryo-Dravidian type.

The Tamil Brahmins are found in all shades of complexion, and are handsome in appearance. They are of the medium height. The orthodox Brahmins and others who do not possess western culture get their bodies clean-shaved at least once in every month, leaving a long tuft of hair on the back of the head which is made smooth by gingelly oil. It is now a kind of fashion among some young men and a few grown up men to have their heads cropped and keep the rest of the body unshaved on the pretext of better comfort and convenience. Some again shave their faces only. All these innovations are repugnant to the orthodox members. In this connection, it may be said that tonsure is one of the sixteen sacraments, and the preservation of a tuft of hair is necessary for the Brahmins on ceremonial occasions : and yet this fact is ignored by those who delight in the innovations above referred to.

The dress of the men of all sections is similar. Orthodox Brahmins and others wear *sōman*, a loin-cloth five yards in length and about one and a half yards in breadth. They also put on *Vaishtis* three yards in length and with the same breadth as that of the loin dress. In Malabar, Cochin, and

Travancore many, except on ceremonial occasions, wear *mundus*, (small loin dress) like the Nambuthiris and Nayars, with small ones thrown over their shoulders. The educated young men of these days wear costumes of European pattern. Unmarried young men and boys wear only *mundus*; boys and young men, in schools and Colleges, wear coats and caps, and the adoption of European costume is but a step higher. The hair on the head of a Brahman woman is parted in the middle and tied into a knot behind. It is well smoothened with gingelly or cocoanut oil.

The dress of the married woman is called a *Pudava*, which is a coloured cloth nine yards in length and two and a half cubits in breadth. Three or four folds of the cloth are held together on the left side of the loin, while the rest of it is passed between the legs to be tucked up behind rather tightly, and the remaining portion, after passing twice or thrice round the loin is carried over the right shoulder after covering the breast. Young women put on a petty coat or *ravikka*. A married woman wears a cloth of any colour except white, but an old woman generally wears only red cloths. A widow puts on a white cloth. A girl before marriage wears a *Pāvada*.

The men wear ear-rings, a waist-band of gold or silver and rings for the fingers. The women, on the other hand, are not sparing in the matter of ornaments, and their desire for them is unbounded and often beyond the means of their husbands. They have ornaments for the head, nose, ears, neck, arms, fingers, waist, feet, and in fact for every part of the body.

The following are the ornaments in common use among them :—

Jatasingáram.—It is a gold ornament which consists of a series of admirably carved minor ones, almost square in shape, attached together by gold wire and hooked so as to look like a single ornament. It is attached to the plaited hair by means of hooks.

Nàgar.—It is a delicately worked gold ornament, shaped like a hooded serpent, and generally placed at the back of the crown. This is now superseded by the *Ràkkudi*. Below this are placed some minor ones named *Thàzhambu*, *Koppu Jadabelli*, worked in imitation of rose and other flowers.

Rakkudi.—It is an elaborately carved round-shaped ornament, kept in position on the crown of the plaited hair. In front of this, on either side, are two small gold ornaments, one circular and the other crescent-shaped, but these are now worn mostly by children.

Jimiki.—It is a pendent in the shape of an inverted cup made of gold sometimes set with rubies all over and with clusters of pearls hanging from the bottom. It is now out of fashion.

Kammal or Olai.—This is the most common ear ornament, and is made of gold or set with rubies or diamonds. The latter is now the fashion.

Bulakku.—This is an ornament for the nose, and is made of gold and set with rubies or diamonds with a big pearl attached to its base. This is worn by girls and women below middle age.

Nathu.—This is a circular ring set with pearls and rubies, worked in fanciful shapes of birds and flowers. It is now out of fashion.

Mukutti.—This is worn on the right nostril, and a small hole is bored through the skin for the purpose.

Kodi.—A string of gold with the *táli* or marriage badge is worn round the neck by married women. This *táli* is never removed as long as the husband is alive.

Kásumala.—This is a garland of gold coins worn round the neck. Old Venetian Sequins were very common, but are now substituted by five-france French coins. Half sovereigns are also rarely used. The number of coins varies from fifty to a hundred. This jewel is a great favourite with women, and costs five or six hundred rupees. It is presented to the bride at the time of wedding.

Saradu or Addiyal.—This is a close fitting ornament worn round the neck.

Kárai.—This is a common ornament worn by children and young women. It consists of a pretty stiff gold wire with ten or twelve gold beads on each side of the hook.

Káppu.—Gold Bracelet.

Páttil.—Wristlet. It is a thin leaf of gold worn round the wrist. At the hook are placed two thin plates of gold half an inch square, either plain or set with precious stones.

Valai or *kankana*.—Glass bangles.

Vanki.—This is a curiously worked ornament of gold, worn like a bangle round the upper arm. It is worn on both the upper arms.

Oddiyānam.—This is a silver or gold girdle, an inch or an inch and a half in breadth with a hook in front.

Metti.—This is a plain silver ring worn round the second toe of each foot, and produces a jingling sound on walking.

Kāppu.—These are plain silver rings worn on each leg.

Golussu.—This is another silver ornament of elaborate workmanship worn round each leg.

There are other old-fashioned silver ornaments—*Thanda*, *Pavasaram*, etc., which are not now in use.

Many of these ornaments are worn by grown up girls and young women who, after being blessed with a few children, become indifferent and limit their desire to the wearing of a few of them. *Kammal Kodi*, and a few necklets, *Kāsumala*, armlets *Kāppu* and *Golussu* are generally worn by them.

From the foregoing account of the customs and manners of the Tamil Brahmins, it may be seen that many of the old ideals are gradually disappearing. The old divisions among them exist more for the sake of marriage prohibitions than for anything else. The custom of matrimonial relations twenty years ago, was to select a suitable bride for a young man according to the old *Sāstraic* ideals, and give her ornaments in proportion to the means of the bridegroom's parents, which might in some cases form a nucleus for her maintenance in the event of her husband's premature death; but now this custom has so far changed that the husband has to be purchased at a price which has been enhanced by western education and culture. Parents with a few daughters and sons become poor by the marriage, of the former and by the education of the latter; and in the majority of cases, there is no chance of replenishing the family property by the joint labour of the sons, who generally shift for themselves when they are able to earn.

The daily routine of the Brahmin in his family was, in former times, a series of religious observances, and the junior members, women and children, were in a kind of moral and religious atmosphere, from which they are now completely free.

The present social conditions of the Tamil Brahmins.

The various ceremonies which a Brahmin has to perform are performed either without comprehending their real significance or purpose, or are sometimes overlooked with the exception of the ancestor worship (*Srādha*). The religious and moral education of boys and young men reading in schools and colleges leave very much to be desired according to the old Brahmanic ideals.

In point of occupation, they have adapted themselves to the modern environments, and are sufficiently speculative and enterprising. They are engaged in all occupations which afford them a decent income. Thus, many of the old customs are disappearing by the influence of western education and culture. The old Brahmanic ideals, under the same influence, will be a golden mean.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EMBRANS

AND

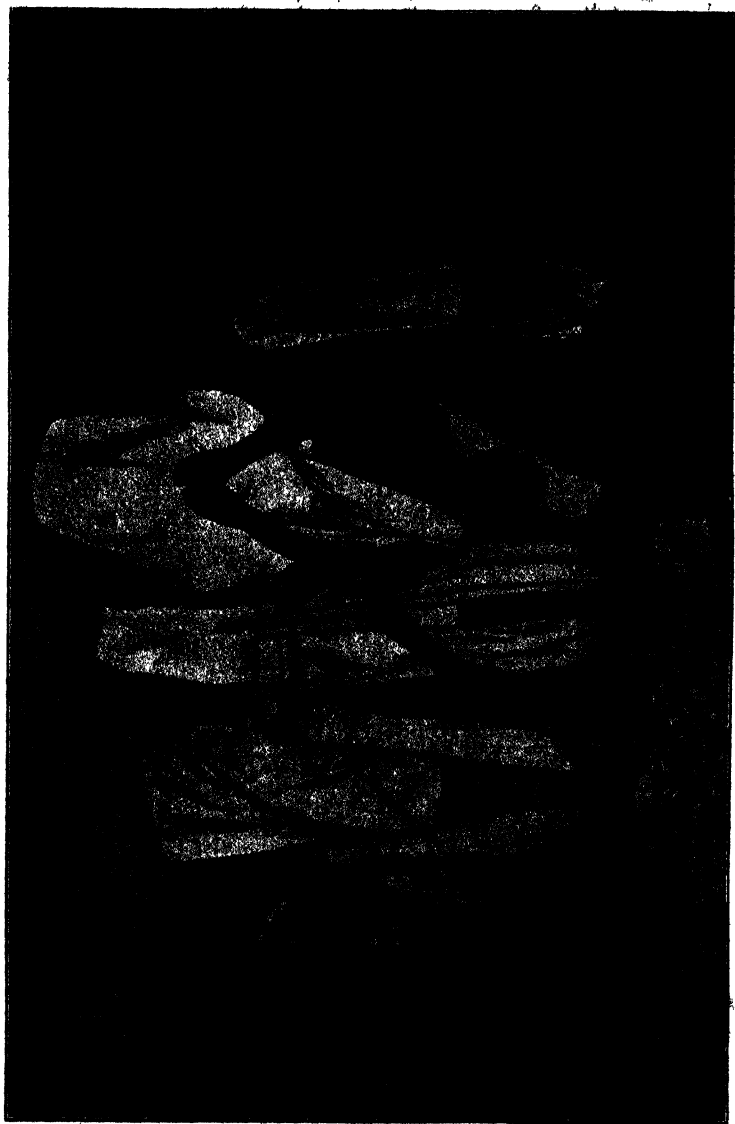
THE KONKANI BRAHMANS.

THE EMBRANS.

They are a class of Brahmans living in the 32 villages north of Perumpuzha, and are strictly speaking the Brahmans of Kerala. But they are now regarded as *Paradesis* (foreigners), because of their having declined to observe the customs introduced by Parasurama and afterwards by Sri Sankara. They are immigrants from South Canara and have never been domiciled here. They numbered 943 in the State at the last Census.

According to Tulu traditions, Parasurama, after the departure of the original settlers (Brahmans),
Traditional Origin of the Caste. procured for the reclaimed tract of Kerala, new Brahmans by taking the nets of some fishermen, and making a number of Brahmanical threads with which he invested the fishermen and made them Brahmans. He then retired to the mountains for *Tapas* (penance), telling them that if they were ever in distress and invoked him, he would come to their aid. After the lapse of some time, during which they were not in distress, they were curious to know if Parasurama would remember them, and invoked him as directed. He promptly appeared, but punished their mocking him by cursing them, and causing them to revert to their old status of Sudras. There were no Brahmans again in the land until Tulu Brahmans were brought from Ahikshetra by Mayura Varma of the Kadamba dynasty. This account is somewhat similar to that given about the *Sapagrasthas* among the Nambuthiris.

There are various traditions given about their immigration and settlement, but all agree in attributing the introduction of the Tulu Brahmans of the present day to Mayura Varma, in spite of the variations in detail regarding their immigration and settlement. One account says that the Habasikha chief of the



A GROUP OF KONKANI BRAHMANS.

Parayas drove out Mayura Varma, but afterwards in turn expelled by Mayura Varma's son or son-in-law Lokaditya, who brought Brahmans from Ahikshetra and settled them in the thirty-two villages. Another account makes Mayura Varma himself, the invader of the country, which was in the possession of the Parayas and fishermen who expelled Parasurama's Brahmans. A third account mentions the settlement of the Brahmans from Gokurnam, which is said to have been a Brahman settlement in very early times, and there was probably a further influx of Brahmans thither owing to the advance of Muhammadan conquests.

The thirty-two villages in which the Brahmans are said to have been settled by Mayura Varma are the important centres of Tulu Brahmans, who are considered to be the followers of Bhattacharya. They lived in several villages or places such as Sivalli, Kota, Koteswar and Kandawar, which became their recognized headquarters, and from which arose the names of the divisions among them. Kota, Kotèswar and Kandawar Brahmans speak the old Canarese language, and the Sivallis, the Tulu dialect.

These Tulu Brahmans who have settled in Malabar in comparatively recent years are known as Embrantiris or Embrans. They are found all over the Cochin State except in the Chittur Taluk. Some are Sâma Vedis following Aswâlayana Grihya Sutras. They observe the rules and rites ordained by their original leader, Bhattacharya. Like other Brahmans, they practise infant marriage for girls, and observe the sixteen *Karmas* (ceremonies) and other customs.¹

The Embrans found in the State are Sivite and Vaishnavite Brahmans from all these sections acting as priests in temples, or doing services as assistants under Nambuthiris, or cooks in palaces and private houses. Nambuthiri males and females generally interdine with them. In some places, however, they are not to enter the kitchens of Nambuthiris, nor do Nambuthiri women eat the food cooked by them. Next to Nambuthiris, they command a greater respect, probably on account of their Malayali origin and priestly service in temples.

1. Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Vol. I, page 376.

THE KONKANI BRAHMANS.

The Konkani Brahmans come under one of the divisions of the *Pancha* (five) *Gaudas*, as distinguished from the *Pancha Dravidas*. They are an important community mostly found in the southern division of the State. In the last Census of the State, they numbered 8522, 4580 being males and 3942 females.

The original habitat of the Konkani Brahmans was the Punjab, where on the banks of the five rivers, settled the five tribes or peoples *Panchajana*, who in after times spread their civilization throughout India. Of these, some were settlers on the banks of the Saraswati, (supposed to be the modern Saraswati near Thaneswar), and this river which is the subject of several hymns of the *Rig Vêda*, is the most sacred of the ancient rivers, "worshipped even in that remote period". It is also said, that the ancestor of the tribe on the banks of the Saraswati, was *Sâraswata*, son of Dadhicha, and is known in the *Vêdic* literature as *Saraswata* or *Saraswan* (*Rig Veda*, VII, 96). When all other Brahmans lost the knowledge of the Vedic literature owing to the great famine that drove them to various places in India, they, in order to regain their knowledge, had perforce to become the pupils of *Sâraswata*, and to acknowledge him as their spiritual preceptor. It is an admitted fact that the current recension of the *Taittiriya-Vêda* is that settled by *Sâraswata*, and differs from that detailed in the *Grihya Sutra* of *Satyâshâda*, while the *Salya Parvam* of the *Mahabharata* describes him "as the foremost of the *Rishis* of unrivalled splendour and God-like mien". It is from this most celebrated ancient sage that the Konkanas derive their name as the Gauda *Sâraswata* Brahmans.

As their numbers increased, the Aryans left the banks of the sacred Saraswati, moved eastwards and onwards into Bengal, and settled in Trihotrapura, (modern Tirhut in Mithila). The ancient name of this central part of Bengal was Gauda; and the immigrants into that part got the name of Gauda Saraswata Brahmans, a name by which one of the five divisions is known.

In common with the other Brahmans of India, the Gauda Saraswata Brahmans believed in the traditional origin of the first *Varna*, from the mouth of the *Virat Purusha*—the universal spirit—as recorded in the *Purusha Sûkta* of the Vedas, in the *Itihasas* and *Purânas*.

The Sahyādrī-Kānda of the Skānda-Purāṇa contains the traditional history of all the Brahmans that have settled on the West Coast. The first chapter of *Uttara Rahasya* of the Sahyādrī-Kānda (verses 47-54) gives a short account of the history of this community.

To assist him at sacrifices and at *Sradhas*, and to entertain his guests, Parasurama, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, brought from Trihotrapura, ' Brahmans of ten *Gotras*¹, settled them in the districts of Gomārchala, Panchakrosa, and Kusasthali.

In other parts of the work some more *Gotras* are mentioned, and this accounts for the fourteen *Gotras* now extant among the members of the community. Tradition says that on the information of the prosperity and affluence of their brethren in their new homes, *i. e.*, the land of their transplantation four more *Gotras* of people came from Tirhut and settled in Goa. Those who were brought were settled in a group of sixty-six villages or hamlets, hence called *Sassasti* or *Shatshasti*. The others who followed the first batch from Tirhut settled in the district of Tiswadi, which means thirty villages or hamlets. Thus the number of villages occupied by the two batches of immigrants amounted to ninety-six, and the people were known as Shenvi Brahmans—Shenvi being a corruption of *Shannovi* derived from the Sanskrit *Shannavati*—meaning ninety-six. The fifth chapter of the *Uttara Rahasya* of the *Sahyadri-Kanda* gives an account of the settlement on the plots of land assigned by Parasurama to each of the sixty-six families that constituted the ten *Gotras*. There is also reason to believe that the names—*Shenivis* and *Sasasthikars*—were at first convertible terms and used indiscriminately; but at present, the name *Shenvi* is restricted to the Sivite section of the community and the other term *Sasasthikars* to the Vaishnava section.

As Goa was the most important settlement in southern Konkani, one of the seven Provinces reclaimed by Parasurama from the Sea, the Gauda Saraswata Brahmans who settled in Goa were called Gauda Saraswata Konkani Brahmans.

The Puranic account of the colonization of Konkani by the Aryans of Trihotrapura under their leader Parasurama places their advent to the

The probable period
of their Settlement in
Konkan-Goa.

1. Ten *Gotras*—Bharadwaja, Kausika, Vatsa, Kaundinya, Kasyapa, Vasishtha, Jamadagni, Viswamitra, Gautama, and Atri.

west coast many centuries before the christian era. As sober history is not prepared to accept the Puranic chronology, it is desirable to fix the date of their settlement in Goa. The references to Gomanchala, Sourashtra, Konkan in the Mahabharata, its supplement Harivamsa and in the Bhagavata, and other Puranas go to show that Konkan and Goa were Aryan settlements long before the composition of these works. The affinities of the Konkani Brahmans language with Prakrit and Mithili tend to prove that the migration must have taken place soon after the breaking up of Sanskrit into countless Prakrita dialects of which only a few are preserved in literature. It is therefore highly probable that the original immigrants from Trihotrapura left their northern home shortly after the rise of Buddhism. As Tirhut formed the southern district of Mithila which became the headquarters of Buddhism, Brahmanism must have sustained a terrible check and must have been almost suppressed. The great sacrifices must have fallen into disuse; Vedic scholarship which was essentially necessary for the careful performance of the sacrifices must have been disregarded; and consequently the means of sustenance for Brahmans must have disappeared. This may be supposed to be the probable cause of their deserting Trihotrapura and settling in Goa.

Emigration and Settlement of the Konkanas in Cochin.

When Goa was conquered by Vijayanagar, these Saraswata Brahmans placed themselves under the protection of the rulers of that kingdom. For nearly a quarter of a century after the conquest of Goa by the Portuguese they continued unmolested under the Portuguese Governors. During that period they took to a lucrative trade in European goods; but with the establishment of the Inquisition at Goa; and the religious prosecution set on foot by the Portuguese, the community left Goa in voluntary exile. While some submitted to conversion, others fled to the north and south; and those that fled to the south, settled themselves in Canara and Calicut. Receiving a cold reception at the hands of the Zamorin, they proceeded further south and sought the protection of the rulers of Cochin and Travancore, where they flourish even to this day. The christian converts who followed in the wake of the first batch of exiles settled themselves in the important centres of trade

in the State as copper-smiths, and they are even now deriving a profitable trade in copper wares. The Brahman immigrants are called Konkani, because of their having emigrated from Konkani ; and they speak the Konkani dialect of Marathi.

Marriage is allowed within the pale of the community.

Marriage Prohibitions.

The sections of the community that do not object to interdining have no objection to intermarrying. The Vaishnavites, and Sivites among the Gauda Saraswata Brahmans freely interdine and intermarry. The prohibition of the marriage of the same Gotra and Pravara, as well as of *Sapindas*, is in force among these Brahmans. The children of sisters though they belong to different Gotras are not allowed to intermarry. The marriage to a paternal aunt's daughter or to a maternal uncle's daughter, though not sanctioned by the *Smritis* and though not prevalent among other branches of Gauda Saraswata Brahmans, has in imitation of the custom of the Dravida Brahmans been introduced. But such marriages do not at all amount to an injunction. The marriage to one's sister's daughter, which obtains among *Désastha* and *Karnataka* Brahmans, is not in vogue among the Gauda Saraswata Brahmans.

The community holds that, of the *Samskaras* (sacraments),

Marriage.

marriage is the most important, as it at once establishes a relation between the past and the future, and links the living and the dead, and as the object of marriage is to hand down the ancient religion and to keep up the uninterrupted offering of the *pindas* to the *pitris* at their *Srādha*. All the *Samskaras* are to be performed by a *Grihastha* or house-holder in the *Grihya*-fire, the fire which he has to maintain for ever after his marriage. The *Grihastha* is to support all other *Asramas*. In short, the immediate object of marriage is to bring up children for the preservation of the race and for convenience to all beings.

Marriage is *Brahma* in form ; the bridegroom is invited to take to wife, the bride, properly adorned and dressed. Though there is no reference to horoscopes in the *Vedas*, the *Grihya Sūtras*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* or the *Puranas*, the consultation of horoscopes has become the prime factor in marriage alliances. If the horoscopes agree, the father of the

girl to be married negotiates with the father of the boy, and when they have come to a definite understanding and settlement, the bride's father arranges for the public declaration of the intended matrimonial alliance. He invites his friends and relations as well those of the bridegroom, the *Purôhita* (priest) of the bride's father states on behalf of the latter, the conditions of the marriage which the *Purôhita* of the bridegroom's father accepts on behalf of the latter; and if the hour and the date of the wedding is settled previously, one of the priests reads the *Panchangam* (almanac) of the day and announces the hour fixed for the wedding ceremony. After the offering of sweets and flowers, the sprinkling of rosewater, and distribution of *pan-supâri*, the assembly disperses. This is called *Nischayatâmbula* and corresponds to *Kanya-Varana*.

It is followed by *Vâgdâna* or the betrothal—a ceremony forming an essential part of the marriage. It is performed either a few days before the wedding or on the day preceding it.

In accordance with the injunction of Aswalayana that a Brahmachari who has performed the *Samâvartana* ceremony shall stay in a house where he will be honoured with the offering of *Madhuparka*, the *Samavartana* is celebrated on the day preceding the wedding, if the wedding happens to be on the fore-noon of the next day; but if the marriage takes place in the evening, the ceremony of *Samâvartanam* is finished on the same day; after which the bridegroom with his friends and relations is invited by the father of the bride to his house. If the bridegroom is poor, the expenses of the *Samâvartanam* are defrayed by the bride's father, and in this case, the bridegroom is for the first time, invited to his house the evening previous to the *Samâvartanam*.

At sunrise or sunset according as the wedding takes place during the day or at night, *Ghatikilânga* is made in the bride's house, an antiquated mode of determining the hour of wedding by means of a metal bowl which is left afloat in the consecrated water. There is a little hole in the bottom of the bowl through which water slowly enters. When the bowl is filled to a certain point, it sinks and indicates one *Ghati*—one hour of 24 minutes' duration. The round is repeated until the hour of wedding arrives.

Then the parents with their daughters enter the *Mandapa*, the place intended for the celebration of the marriage, and

perform the *Mandapa-Pratishta*,¹ *Ganapathy Puja*,² *Punyaha-vachana*,³ *Matrika Puja*,⁴ and *Nandisradha*.⁵ Then the parents go to invite the bridegroom's party and the girl is engaged in worshipping Gauri, Hara, and Sachi in the inner apartment of the house.

On the arrival of the bridegroom, lamps are waved before him; he is seated on a reserved seat, honoured as a guest, and is offered the *Madhuparka*—the highest mark of respect. The bridegroom then stands up while a thin piece of cloth is held in front of him as a screen, and the bride is carried to the place by her maternal uncle, and is made to stand facing the bridegroom. Priests recite the Surya-hymn (X. 85, Rig Veda) and certain portions of the *Taittiriya Brahmana*; on this occasion women are also expected to sing auspicious songs. The priests announce the *Gótra* and *Pravara* of the two parties to be united in wedlock, the names of the father, grandfather, and great grandfather, after which the screen is removed and the bridegroom and the bride are enabled to see each other. The bridegroom then touches the middle of the forehead of the bride with the blade of a Darbha grass, and the bride and the bridegroom pour rice on each other's head. The bride's father touches the feet of his elders, and with their permission consecrates water for giving away his daughter in marriage, and with a stream of this water gives her to the bridegroom and, instructing him in his future behaviour, receives from him a promise so to act. The bride's father presents to his son-in-law a small sum of money tied in a piece of cloth together with rice and one or two pieces of turmeric as *Dakshina* for accepting the gift. This is called *Varadekshina*. The bridegroom with certain *mantrams* touches the abdomen of the girl. They are sprinkled over with the water that remains after the *Dhára*. The *Mangalasara* is next tied round the wrist of the married couple, who once again scatter rice on each others head. The husband takes from his head a flower, dips it in milk and ghee and with it makes a mark on the forehead of the bride, who in turn, taking a flower from her head, makes a mark on his.

1. Installation of the marriage dais.
2. Worship of Ganapathy.
3. Recitation of the mantrams for sanctifying water.
4. Puja to mother
5. Worship of ancestors.

They garland each other, and the husband puts the *Mangalasutra* round the bride's neck, adorns her with other jewels and presents her with cloths. The bride is made to wear an upper garment (*uttariya*) to one of the corners of which is tied an arecanut, and a piece of gold and a corner of this *uttariya* is tied to a corner of the husband's upper garment. This represents the union of husband and wife in all religious duties, and matrons bless the union by scattering rice on the heads of the married couple. The bride and bridegroom then jointly worship Mahalakshmi, Parvati and Sachi, after which they enter the *Mandapa* perform the hymeneal *Homa*, and in the presence of the sacred fire the bride-groom takes the hand of the bride (*Panigrahana*) and leads her round the fire (*Parinayana*). He asks her to ascend a mill-stone, so that she may be firm and constant, and makes her step on seven small grains of rice. This makes the marriage complete—*Saptapadi*. The priest sprinkles water over their heads, while they look in a mirror placed on the floor; and the priest finishes the *Homa*, and the ceremony of the waving lights is performed by women. Then the married couple go into an apartment where they take their meals and sleep in it. The nuptial fire is maintained for three nights, and *Aupasana* is observed. On the fourth day, at nightfall, the married couple take their bath, put on white clothes, and are honoured by the parents of the bride, and they perform a *Nagabali*. Then the bride is taken to the bridegroom's house; the married couple are not allowed entrance by the husband's sister until they promise that the daughter of their union shall be wedded to her son. The bridegroom makes presents of clothes or money to his sister and is then allowed to take his wife into the house. They worship at the doorsill, enter the house, and the young wife is installed as the queen (*Samragini*) of the house, and is called by a new name. After this ceremony they return to the bride's house, and next day complete the marriage by a *Mangala-snana* (bath after the marriage) and *Brahmana-bhojana* (feeding of Brahmans). After the entertainment the Brahmans invoke blessings on the married couple.

It has been thought necessary to enter into all the details of the marriage as prevalent among the Gauda Saraswata Brahmans, because they are surrounded in Canara mostly by

Yajur-Vedis of the Boudhayana school, and ~~in~~ Kerala by *Yajur-Vedis* of the Apasthamba school, who believe that the form and procedure of marriage obtaining among them are the orthodox ones and that all other forms must necessarily be unorthodox, and cavil at other forms. The *Saptapadi* is the most essential part of the marriage, indissoluble among the members of the community. It is not correct to say that the marriage becomes binding on the parties only after the celebration of the ceremonies of the fourth day.

Asvalayanacharya himself admits that diversity of marriage customs exists in towns and villages, and the commentator adds that the various customs obtaining in towns, villages and one's own family may be observed, but not combined in marriage. In the course of their peregrinations the Gauda Saraswata Brahmans have not been slow to adopt marriage customs from their neighbours, the Dravida Brahmans, and this is more especially true of the *Vaishnava* section who have made the marriage rite unusually elaborate. Consequently, this ceremony among the rich lasts for eight days and among others for five days. An attempt has now been made to bring the wedding into strict conformity with the precept of *Asvalayana* and thus revive the ancient ideal. Out of considerations for convenience and interest, the *Grihapravésana Homa* (oblations to fire after entering into the husband's house) which ought to be performed in the bridegroom's house, that is, her new home and which is aptly called *Grihapravésaniya hóma*, is in violation of Asvaláyana's injunction combined with the *Lajahoma*. The *Aupāsana*, and the minimum *Brahmacharya* of three days are observed in the bride's house; and this adds unnecessarily to the cost of the wedding. The party of rival, consistent with the injunctions of *Asvalayana Grihya Sutas* 1, 7, 21, insist on the starting of the married couple to the bridegroom's house with the nuptial fire on the very night of the wedding on performing the *Grihapravésaniya Hóma* there, or observing the *Aupāsana* and the *Brahmacharya* for three days, and concluding the marriage with a *Mangala-snāna*, *Brahmanabhojana* and *Asirvada* (blessings to the married couple). As this form of marriage—the form authorised by the Asvalayanacharya—is obtaining among the members of the community in the Bombay Presidency, in Goa, Indore, and Gwalior and is

practised by the Havika and Shivalli Brahmans in Canara ; it was recommended to the members of this community in Canara, Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, at the grand conference of the representatives of the community from all parts of India held in December 1908 and more than fifty marriages have already been performed in accordance with it.

As the girl has to be disposed of before she attains puberty and proper matches are difficult to make as the selection must be within the community, marriage has become ruinously expensive and, in common parlance, synonymous with bankruptcy. The bridegroom has to be given a large sum of money, the major portion of which is converted into jewels for the bride, clothes, a gold ring and utensils for daily worship ; jewels and clothes and money are to be presented to the bride ; presents of clothes are to be made to the relations, and the castemen and women are to be sumptuously entertained for four days. In Cochin and Travancore much money is squandered on nautches, music and fireworks. These items involving the expenditure of a large sum of money bring ruin to families and make men dread the birth of a daughter and look upon it as a certain misfortune. To mitigate the evil, however, some of the intelligent families have set the example of investing the dowry in a Bank or on land in the name of the bride and thus obviating extravagant waste of it on idle shows at the marriage.

All pre and post-natal ceremonies performed by the Konkana Brahmans, and the customs connected with polygamy adultery and divorce are mostly similar to those in vogue among other classes of Brahman, and are avoided for the sake of repetition.

Inheritance is from father to son. In British territory the inheritance is regulated according to the Hindu Law. In Cochin and Travancore, the property of all people who die without heirs goes to the Devaswam the authorities of which direct certain ceremonies to be performed on the anniversary of the death of such persons.

When it is found difficult to settle points of social or religious law, Manu, Yājñavalkya, and Angiras have laid down rules for the constitution of *Parishads*, whose decision is to be accepted as final. The *Parishad* may consist of three, four and not more than ten members.

In villages where the community is not large the temple committee is called *Dhajana*, the ten. With the growth of democratic ideas these terms are now applied to the whole assembly of members of the community when they are gathered to discuss any question regarding the caste or temple. Transgressions of caste rules, failure to undertake religious work connected with the temple and other matters affecting the interest of the community are discussed, and if the matters are within the competence of the people, they are settled; if not, they are referred to the *Swamis*.

In common with other Brahmins the Konkanis hold the Vēdas as the highest scriptural authority.

Religion. Their ritual being based on the Vēdas, and their religious ceremonies being performed with the recitation of *Mantras*, their religion is in this aspect Vēdic. In so far as the worship of the deities extolled in the *Puranas* and the rites or ceremonies and vows recommended by the *Puranas*, find favour with them, their religion is Puranic. They belong to the *Sa-kala Sāka* of the Rig Veda, and follow the *Sūtras* of Asvalayana in the performance of their *Srouta* and the *Grihya-karmas*. They have no objection to accept other *Grihya Sūtras* if they are in conformity with Asvalayana's *Sūtras*. In addition to the *Srouta* and the *Grihya Sūtras* of their *Acharya* they accept as authority of the *Grihyaparishishta*, the supplement to the *Grihya Sūtras*, Kumarilabhatta's *Grihya-karikas*, *Sounakya-prayōga* and *Narayana Bhatta's prayōga-Ratna*. *Prayoga-parijata* quoted by Narayana Bhatta is also looked upon as an-authority in certain matters. In the course of their *Brahmayajna* they repeat the first verse of the *Yājñavalkya Smṛiti* which may be taken as the legal code of the community. This code is elaborately commented on by Vijnanēswara, Aparārka and Sulapāni. Apararka's commentary is accepted in settling questions relating to social and religious matters and Vijnanēswara in strictly legal matters. The association of the Sage Yājñavalkya with the court of Janaka and the residence of the community in Trihōtarapura make it probable that the Dharmaśāstra of the community is Yājñavalkya Smṛiti. Though Yājñavalkya Smṛiti is the Smṛiti intended for *Svādhyāya*, other Smṛitis are also appealed to as authorities. The Vaishnava section of this community accept

the compilations made by Sri Madhwacharya and his successors.

Puranic Religions.—The sixteen *Samāskaras* sacraments and the funeral rites enumerated above are vedic in their nature. It is now time to advert to the rites and ceremonies enjoined by the *Puranas* and practised by the community. For purposes of religious observances, this caste follows the lunar year beginning with the month of Chaitra. (March-April).

The following is a list of religious holidays:—

Chaitra.

1. The first of the bright half is Yugādi the New year's day.
2. Ramanavami—Sri-Rama's birthday.
3. Full-Moon—Hanuma Jayanti.

Vaishaka.

4. Akshaya-Tritiya—Parasurama Jayanti.
5. Narasimha Jayanti—the fourteenth of the bright-half.
6. Full-moon—Karma Jayanti.

Jyashtha.

7. Fourteenth of the bright-half—Vata-Savitri-Vrata.

Ashada.

8. Sukla-Dashami—Chaturmāsa begins.
9. Sukla-Ekadeshi (eleventh day after full-moon).
10. Sukla-Dwadeshi (twelfth day after full-moon).

These three days as well as the corresponding three days in the bright half of the month of Kārtika are looked upon as of special sanctity.

Śravana.

11. Nāga-Panchami—on which day Nagas are worshipped.

12. Upākarma is performed on a day when the moon is in the asterism called *Śravana*. This generally takes place on the day of the full-moon. If an eclipse of the moon takes place on that day the *Upākarma* is performed on the *Panchami* when the moon is in the asterism called *Hasta*.

13. Krishnashtami—the birthday of Sri-Krishna.

Bhadrápáda.

14. Gauri-Tritiya—Gauri puja and Vayana dāna.
15. Vinayaka Chaturthi—Ganapathi puja.
16. Anantha Vrata.
17. The dark half of this month is *Mahálāya paksha* when on certain days Sradha for all *Pitris* is performed.
18. Mahalaya—*Amāvasi*.

Ashváyujā.

19. The first nine days of this month constitute the Navaratri. Many observe fasts and devote themselves to the worship of Durga and read *Devimāhātmya*.

20. Lalita-Panchami.
21. Mahanavami.
22. Vidyadesami.

It is to be noted that on the days of the Navaratri consecrated to the *Kuladevatas* (family deities), they are specially worshipped, and that Brahmans and *Suvasanis* (married women) are sumptuously entertained. On these days, the ears of the children are bored for the first time. On the *Desami*, boys are taught the letters of the alphabet.

23. The full-moon of Asvayuja is *Agrāyanam*, the Indian harvest feast—when new rice is eaten.

24. The fourteenth of the dark half is *Naraka Chaturdeshi* or Dipāvali.

Kartika.

25. Sukla Dashami. (The tenth day after new-moon)
26. Sukla Ekadeshi (The eleventh day after new-moon.)
27. Sukla Dwadeshi—Tulasi puja.

All these three days are very important to the Vaishnavas.

28. Full-Moon—Vyasa puja and Dipotsava.

Margashira.

29. Subramanya Shashti.

Māgha.

In most temples of the community in Canara and Malabar five days' *Utsava* is held from the third of the bright half of this month.

30. Rathasaptami.
31. Mahāsivaratri.

On these days rites and ceremonies laid down in the Purana and systematized in the work called Varataraja are performed. All *Sumangalis* (married women) worship *Tulasi devī* and *Sūrya Narayana* on all Sundays and Fridays in the month of *Srāvana*. Particular modes of life, food, worship, etc., are prescribed for each of the lunar months in the *Mahatmyas* of the months. Of these months Kartika and Māgha are the most popular. The *Adhikamāsa* or the intercalary month is observed by some in the hope of realising the merits promised for such observances.

Astrological ceremonies.—To propitiate the planets whose position is astrologically inauspicious or dangerous to life various ceremonies are observed; and presents are given to *Purohitas* who are engaged to perform *hōmans* for muttering *Mantras* (japa), and for reciting *Sthotras*—eulogiums in veneration of the deities presiding over the planetary orbs.

From the nature of the *Kuladevatas* or tutelary deities worshipped by the Gauda Saraswata Brahmins on their arrival in Goa, it will appear that these Brahmins were originally Bhagavatas *i. e.*, making no difference between Vishnu and Siva. The community at present consists of two sects, Saivites and Vaishnavites. The Saivites are under the spiritual jurisdiction, of their Guru whose chief monastery is called *Kaivalya-Māta*. Unbroken tradition points to the famous Gaudapāda Vivaranacharya, the guru of the famous Govinda, more famous *yati*, who was the preceptor of Sri Sankaracharya, as the reputed founder of this *Māta*. The Saivites are mostly found in the Bombay Presidency, Savantawadi, Baroda, Indore, and Gwalior. All questions, social, religious and spiritual, affecting the Saivites are settled by their Guru, whose decision in such matters is final. They follow the Advaita school of the Vedānta philosophy as expounded by Sri Sankaracharya, make no distinction between Vishnu and Siva in point of superiority, and are still Bhagavatas. They use holy ashes for marking the various parts of the body and put on a *tilaka* on the forehead. Women use *kunkuma* for the *tilaka*, which is a horizontal streak along the forehead.

The Gauda Sāraswata Brahmins in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore are generally Vaishnavites. They follow the Dravida

system of Vedānta as expounded by Sri Maḍhwachārya, look upon Vishnu as the highest deity and all other Gods and Goddesses as Vishnu's servants, carrying out his orders about the preservation of the universe, and worship them in that light. Sri Maḍhwachārya founded in the thirteenth century A. D. the Vaishnava sect, refuted twenty-one creeds and for the spread of his creed journeyed towards the north of India. When he arrived in Goa, he made proselytes in his form of Vaishnava faith a number of Shenvis, who till then were followers of Siva and disciples of the *Kaivalya* Māta. These proselytes were mostly from the Sasashtikars, that is, those who occupied the tract now known as Salsette in Goa. Hence the term Shenvi became restricted to the Saivas, and the name Sasashtikars or Konkana Brahmans to the Vaishnavites. Though converts to Madhwa faith, they have always moved on excellent terms with their *Saiva* brethren, interdining and intermarrying as if no change had taken place in the form of their religion.

The Vaishnavites use *Gopichandana* instead of using ashes in marking the body with caste signs, wear *Urdhwa Pundra* and stamp them with the four weapons of Vishnu—*Sankha*, *Chakra*, *Gada*, *Padma*, and a square stamp called *Narayana* from the fact of its nine squares being filled with the letters of *Narayana Shatākshara* mantra. The Guru brands the disciples on the occasion of their visits with silver stamps of *Sankha* and *Chakra*. There is no objection to the use of sandalwood for making caste marks by *Grihasthas*. Women mark their forehead with *Kunkuma* made of turmeric, and mark with *Gopichandana* the upper arms and the temples with Vishnu's arms. Widows use only *Gopichandana* and do not make a *Tilaka* of *Kunkuma*.

While in Goa, the Gauda Saraswata Brahmans worshipped their tutelary deities brought from Tirhut.

Goda. With the development of the Puranic religion, the number of Gods increased and some of these were claimed as *Kuladēvātas*. So, at present, there are many more *Kuladēvātas* than those enumerated in the Sahyadri Khanda. Of these two became most popular and have been worshipped as *Grāma-Dēvātas*; one of these is Vittoba, whose shrine is in Pandarpur and who is most popular

in the Bombay Presidency, and the other is Narasimha, whose worship they adopted from the Vijayanagar rulers who held sway in Goa. When they came to the Malabar coast, they brought with them the worship of these Gods. After their settlement in Canara, they adopted in addition the worship of Sri Venkitaramana of Tirupathi in North Arcot District, as that deity was found by them to be the most popular of all among the Vaishnavites of the Madras Presidency. Thus these Brahmans have come to worship one or more of these Gods in their private houses or their public temples; but no family in Canara and Malabar has denounced the worship of its tutelary deities originally brought from Tirhut. Their temples in Canara and Malabar are dedicated to Vittoba, Narasimha or Venkitaramana, but in Cochin and Travancore they are generally dedicated to Venkitaramana, whose temple is called Tirumala Devaswam. The word Tirumala is the Tamil equivalent to the Sanskrit Srisaila, the mountain on which the famous temple of Venkitaramana is built in Tirupati. Tirumala is not derived from the name of Tirumala Raja of Vijayanagar, but the Raja was named after the mountain Tirumala. The mountain had various names in Sanskrit and many proper names are derived from these synonyms, such as Seshagiri, Séshadri, Séshachala, Venkitachala, Venkatagiri, Venkatadri, Venkitapati, Venkatésa, etc. Divine service in these temples is performed by Vaidiks of the community. Brahmans of other communities are on no account engaged to perform the puja, etc., in the temple, nor are they admitted within the temple.

In regard to the disposal of the dead, the invariable rule is cremation; but in case of the death of infants or of persons dying of small-pox and leprosy, their remains are buried. Obsequies are performed in accordance with the *Sounakya Prayoga*. On the eleventh day after death, the rich let loose a bull (*Vrishotsarga*). In conformity with the instructions of Sri-Krishna recorded in the *Préta-Kalpa* of the Garuda-purana, *Sapindikarana*, which ought to be performed at the end of the year, is performed on the twelfth day. In order to be entitled to perform this ceremony earlier, one has to offer the sixteen *Masika-Sradhas* on that day. After the *Sapindikarana* the sixteen *Masika-Sradhas*

are performed as they fall due in the course of the year at the end of which comes the *Abdika*, the first annual *Sradha*.

Parvana *Srādha*, at which three Brahmans are entertained at the *Pūrvapankti*, is observed among the rich only. On account of the difficulty of finding out properly qualified persons for entertainment at the *Pūrvapankti* of *Sradha*, Shri Madhwa-chārya has been pleased to sanction the performance of *Srādha* on *Chataka-krama*, which prevails largely among all Madhwa Brahmans. According to this plan, no Brahmans are at all entertained at the *Pūrvapankti*, and preparations intended for the *Srādha* are served on two leaves, one of them being intended for the Vaiswā-Dēvas and the other for the Pitris; both are invited to accept the offerings of food, etc., and are believed and treated as present. While the Gods and the Pitris are engaged in partaking of the feast, the *Yajamāna* (performer) under the guidance of the *Purōhita* prepares three *Pindas* of rice and offers them to the spirit of the person whose *Srādha* he is performing; of father or mother, of grandfather or grandmother, of great grandfather or great grandmother respectively according as the Pitri is father or mother.

After the conclusion of the *Srādha*, whether *Pārvana* or *Chātuka*, the *Yajamāna* performs the *Brahmayajna* and *Tarpana* and dines with his *Purōhita*, friends and relations. This service is called *Uttara-Pankti-Brahmana-Bhōjana*. If death takes place at a very distant place, or if the person is lost by water or fire, and if consequently the bones are not forthcoming, the obsequies are performed according to the procedure called *Palāsa-Vidhi*.

As *Sapindikarana* is performed on the twelfth day after death, there is no need for *Mārana-Diksha*, which is so very common among the Nambuthiris. It is not observed among this community.

The funeral ceremonies constitute the *Antyeshti*—the final service, in as much as the body consecrated by the forty *Samskāras* and purified by the rites and ceremonies of a life-time is rendered acceptable to Agni and offered as a *Purnāhuti* to that Fire, which was first kindled by the married couple in their house.

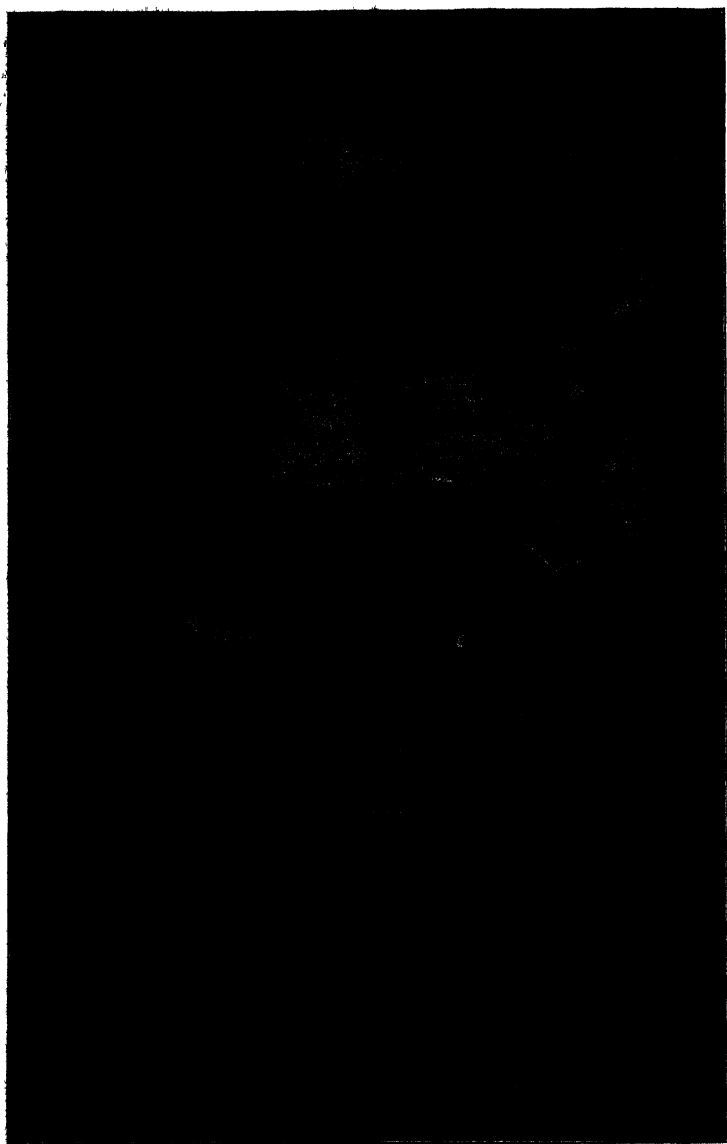
Impurity of child-death and birth lasts for ten days. This is the general rule, but in the case of death of children below three years, the period varies.

In Cochin, the Konkanis are mostly traders; but law,
Occupation. medicine, teaching and other learned professions which are pursued by the members of their community in other places are beginning to be pursued by them in the State also.

It is a well-known fact that Gaudas and Dravidas do not
Social status. interdine and intermarry. Nor do the Gaudas among themselves enjoy such social equality. On their migration to the South, the Gauda Saraswata Brahmans found their neighbours the Dravida Brahmans differ in point of ritual, manners, and customs. Language which, if common to two people, at once would establish ties of artificial relationship between them, was altogether different and hence estranged the two peoples. Instead of assimilating and incorporating themselves with the Dravida Brahmans, their Gauda instincts compelled them to hold aloof and become a distinct community, maintaining its social autonomy in spite of disadvantages and inconveniences.

Grains and vegetables with the milk of cows and buffaloes
Food. and its products constitute the primary articles of the food of the community. In Canara and in the places to the south of it cocoanut oil is largely employed in seasoning and frying, while, in the places to the north of Canara, ghee takes its place. Wheat, rice, Bengal gram, green and black beans, are turned into flour, which is made use of in the preparation of sweet meats. The Gauda Saraswata Brahmans in Cochin and Travancore have attained great excellence in the preparation of a large variety of rich and palatable curries, while their northern brethren surpass them in the preparation of sweetmeats and similar eatables.

It may be here stated that the survival of some primitive Aryan practises in the matter of diet may be found to a small extent among the Gauda Saraswata Brahmans here and there. Such practices do not find favour with the large majority of the community, whose present views about proper diet and living make them look upon such practices as unorthodox. The members of the community, among whom such practices are



A GROUP OF KONKANI WOMEN AND GIRLS

found, may in justification refer to the Salya parva of the Mahabharata in which the eponymous progenitor of the tribe, the first Saraswata, will be found to have been permitted by his mother the Goddess Saraswati to eat food which strict orthodoxy in these days will consider unhallowed. It may be confidently stated, however, that such practices are neither universal nor followed on public or ceremonial occasions and that generally they are looked down upon.

The Konkani Brahmans generally wear *mundus*, but on solemn religious or festive occasions they use *dhótis* and shawls and turbans.

The dress of women consists of a mere *saree* reaching to the ankles, but rarely of a *kanchuka* or a shawl over it. At the wedding ceremonies a small shawl is thrown over the shoulders of the bride.

I am indebted to Mr. Seshagiri Prabhu, M. A., Lecturer, Rajamahendry College, for the account of the Konkani Brahmans.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NON-INDIGENOUS CASTES.

AMBATTAN.

The Ambattans, are the Tamil barbers, some of whom have become, like the Cháliyans and Tarakans, half-Malayali in appearance and have adopted some of the customs of the Malabar Sudras.

Very probably the original occupation of Ambattans was the practice of surgery, to which were added later on, the professions of village barber and musician. This view is supported by the current tradition that the Ambattans are the descendants of the offspring of a Vaisya woman by a Brahman, to whom the medical profession was allotted as a means of livelihood.

There are two classes of Ambattans, namely, the Tamil Ambattans, and the Malayali Ambattans. The latter again form two endogamous groups, one of which follows the system of the inheritance in the male line and the other (Velakkathalavans) in the female line. Those that follow the former system consider themselves superior in status to those who follow the matriarchal form of inheritance. There is neither interdining nor intermarriage between the members of the two groups.

The girls of the Tamil and the Malayalam Ambattans, who belong to the patriarchal system of inheritance, are married both before and after puberty. The marriage ceremonies are performed in the same manner as those of other Tamil Sudras. Various rites are performed such as the planting of a post (*muhúrtakál*) decorated with mango leaves before the auspicious hour (*Muhúrṭam*), worship of Vignésvara, the tonsure of the bride-groom

pāda-pūja (washing the feet of the bride-groom) by his brother-in-law on entering the gate of the bride's house, preparation of the sacred fire (*hómam*) by a Brahman priest, waving of certain things (a lighted lamp, a vessel of water, a vessel of rice and paddy) round the face of the conjugal pair to counteract the potency of the evil-eye, *tali*-tying by the bride-groom, *dāradat-tam* (giving away the bride), going round the fire. The proceedings conclude with pot-searching to find out whether the married couple will beget a son or a daughter¹. Then the guests assembled are treated to a feast. The marriage festivities last for four days, and on the morning of the fourth day, the bridal pair, after bathing and worshipping the local deity return to the bride's house in procession, where the guests assembled are treated to a grand feast. After this, there is a general contribution of a few annas each (*poli*) from those present to meet the expenses of the ceremony. The marriage is then over, and on the fifth day the bridegroom returns home with the bride and her party, who are sumptuously entertained. A man can marry two or more women, but never can a woman mate with more than one man. Widow remarriage is however in vogue among them.

The ceremonies connected with pregnancy and child birth and all post-natal ceremonies are similar to those which prevail among other Tamil Sudras.

The Ambattans worship the ordinary Hindu divinities, but they are also animists to some extent, for they adore such demoniacal Gods, as Mádan, Yakshi, Gandarvan, and are worshippers of ancestral spirits.

The dead bodies of the Ambattans are generally burned, but those who have died as the result of accident or contagious diseases, are buried. The son is the chief mourner. He must, daily after bathing, make rice offerings to the spirits of the departed. The pollution lasts for fifteen days, and on the morning of the sixteenth, the agnates bathe and, after taking a little of the sanctified water brought by a Brahman priest, become free from pollution. Annual memorial ceremonies (*Srādhā*) are also performed by them.

1. Vide marriage customs of the Kaikolans and Devangas.

They faithfully follow their traditional occupation of shaving, and may be seen going early in the morning to their employers' houses. Their women act as mid-wives. Some are physicians as well, while a few of them are musicians also.

Ambattans, like Velakkathalavans, are one of the most important of village servants. They lead a busy life and their services are in requisition on all occasions of marriages, feasts and funerals. As has been seen, they combine in themselves the three useful avocations of shaver, surgeon, and musician.

Ambattans numbered 1,101 at the last census, 511 being males, and 590 females, but these figures include both the Tamil and Malayali Ambattans.

ANDI.

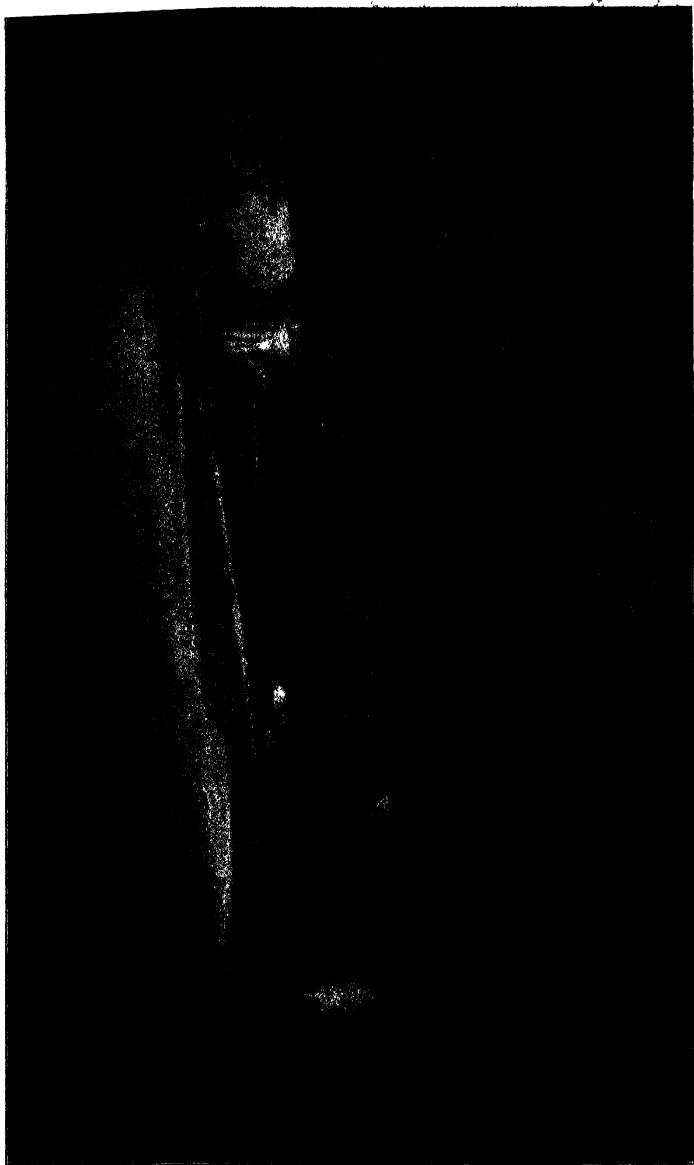
The Andis are a class of Tamil beggars who profess the *Sivite* faith. They are found in some of the villages of the Chittur Taluk begging from door to door and beating a small gong with a stick. The Andis differ from most other castes in that a person of any caste may join their community. Some of them officiate as priests in village temples, especially when large sacrifices of goats, buffaloes, and pigs are made.

It is recorded that¹ South Indian beggars are divided into two classes, *Panjathāndi* and *Paramparayāndi*. The former are famine-made beggars, and the latter are beggars from generation to generation. The former, as a common saying goes, would rob from the person of a child, if an opportunity occurs, while the latter would jump into a well and pick up a child which has fallen into it by an accident, and make it over to its parents.

Andi is, in fact, almost a generic name. All Andis are not beggars however; some are bricklayers, others are cultivators, and yet others are occupied in temples. They employ Brahman priests at their ceremonies, but all of them eat meat and drink alcohol. The Andis are inferior to Pandārams, but the two terms are often indiscriminately applied to the same class of people. The former, however, draw recruits from all classes of Sudras. Andis numbered 331 at the last census, 115 being males, and 216 females.

1. C. Hayavandana Rao, *Tales of Komati Wit and Wisdom*, 7.

A CHAKKAN AND HIS OIL MILL.



CHAKKAN.

The Chakkans are the Tamil oil-pressers and dealers in oil found in the Trichur town and the Chittur Taluk of the State. They call themselves Vaisyaś, and their holy book is called Vaisyapurānam.

The word "Chakkan" means one who works in *Chakku*, or an oil-mill; and they call themselves Vaniyans which signifies trade, *i. e.*, trade in oil as well as in its manufacture, which is the usual occupation of the caste.

Marriage between members of the same *gotras* is never allowed; but a young man can claim the hand of the daughter of his maternal uncle or parental aunt. Among the Chakkans, girls are married both before and after they reach the age of puberty. Their marriage ceremonies are similar to those prevailing in other Tamil castes. The bride's price was formerly twenty-one rupees, but is now thirty-one. The wedding may be celebrated in the bride's house or in that of the bride-groom. In the former case, all expenses connected with the wedding have to be defrayed by the bride-groom, while in the latter case the bride's price alone is paid at the time of settlement. The marriage ceremony begins with the erection of a pandal at the auspicious hour on a day previous to that fixed for the wedding. In a conspicuous place therein are placed two earthen vessels, one containing water, and the other rice and dhol, and by the side of them, are also seven small ones for various seeds. A short time before the auspicious hour for the tali-tying, a Brahman priest prepares the sacred fire or *homam*. The bride's mother, dressed in one of the cloths presented by the bride-groom, goes to a tank or well with a vessel full of water decorated with flowers, and with a cocoanut at its mouth, performs what is called *Gouri pūja*, and returns home to place herself along with the others in the pandal. The other formalities, namely, tying a piece of thread round the wrists of the bride and the bride-groom, the going of the bride-groom to the temple to adore the deity, his return to the bride's house in procession, the waving of a lighted lamp and a vessel containing water round the heads of both to avoid the potency of the evil-eye, the *tali-tying* by the bride-groom after offerings to Gouri, the *dāradattam* (giving of water), the clasping of the bride's hand, the treading on a mortar, the

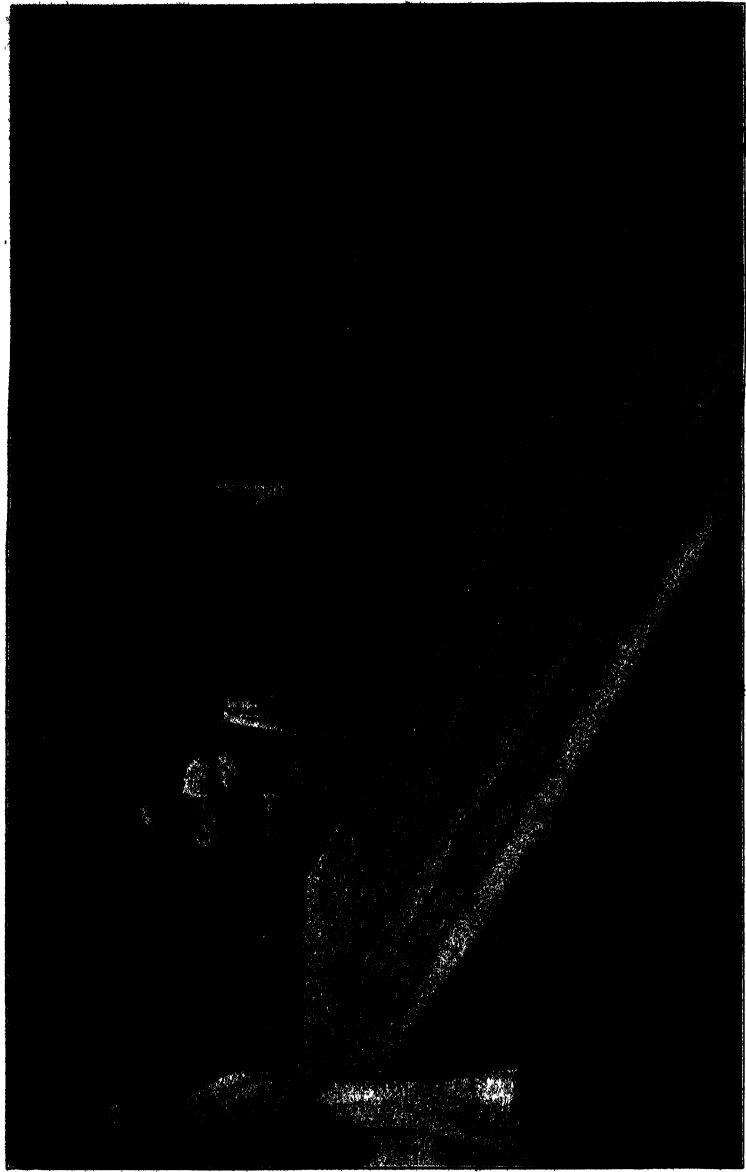
looking at the Pole Star (*Ursamajor*), the going round the fire, and the due obeisance by both to the guests assembled, are all gone through¹ as amongst the Brahmans. The first day's ceremonies are then all over, and the castemen assembled are treated to a feast. There is nothing of importance on the second and third days. On the morning of the fourth day, the bridal pair worships the local deity after a bath, and return home. The bride-groom's party and others among the castemen are treated to a grand feast. On the evening of the same day the conjugal pair go in procession round the streets, and after their return home, an entertainment is given to the guests, each of whom contributes a few annas or even a rupee or two for defraying the expenses incurred for the wedding. The guests then disperse, and the bride-groom returns to his house with the bride, and her parents are all sumptuously entertained. In the case of adult marriage, consummation takes place on a subsequent auspicious night.

Among the Chakkans polygamy is allowed, but polyandry and widow marriage are unknown. All ante and post-natal ceremonies are the same as those prevailing in other Tamil castes.

The Chakkans follow inheritance in the male line. They have their caste assemblies to enquire into all social disputes and settle them.

They worship Siva and Vishnu with equal reverence. They are animists to some extent, and adore Pèchi, Mari Amman, Oodarakaruppan, Chudala Karappan, and the spirits of their ancestors. The Pandavites are also held in veneration. Among these people fire-walking is in vogue. On the morning previous to the day of ceremony a *pūja* is offered to *Pāñchali* by a Brahman priest, when one of the castemen becoming a *Velichapad* and known among them as Véerabhadran points out the spot in front of the temple where the fire-walking is to take place; and then going in procession round the streets returns to the temple. A kind of pit 36 feet long, 18 feet broad, two or three feet deep, is dug and filled in with six or seven cart-loads of fuel, which are burned and reduced to red hot glowing embers. In the evening also are offered similar *pūjas* to the deity, and the idols which are to be

¹, Vide Marriage ceremonies of the Brahmans



CANARESE DEVANGA MEN AND WOMEN IN THEIR WORKSHOP.

afterwards taken in procession are placed on appropriate seats in the quadrangular edifice (*nāṭambalam*) of the temple, amidst the congregation of the caste-men, and music, either vocal or instrumental, is played. This lasts for two or three hours, after which there is a procession through the streets with the idols placed in two richly decorated cars. Amidst a display of fireworks, the playing of musical instruments and the beating of drums the procession moves on; and after returning to the temple the two cars are placed in front of the pit in which the fuel has now subsided into glowing red-hot embers.

The castemen and others, who have been under a vow, purify themselves along with their priest by a bath in the nearest tank or river and go to the pit. The priest first walks on the glowing charcoal, and is at once followed by the castemen, who are in a state of fervent piety. Formerly they used to walk over it three times, but they now do it only once.

The dead bodies of young men and women are buried, while those of the grown-up members are burned. The son is the chief mourner, and the pollution lasts for ten days. On the eleventh day the members of the family are purified by a bath and take a dose of sanctified water (*punyāham*) given by a Brahman priest. On the anniversary of death, a kind of memorial service (*Srādha*) is performed for the spirit of the departed.

The Chakkāns follow the traditional occupation of the caste, namely, oil-pressing, and oil selling. The oils they deal in are gingelly (*sisamum*), cocoa-nut, Illuppa (*bassia longifolia*) and ground-nut (*calophyllum inophyllum*). According to the *sāstras*, the crushing of gingelly seeds and the sale of gingelly oil are sinful acts, and no one, who does not belong to this class, will either press or sell.

DEVANGA.

The Devangas are a caste of weavers speaking Telugu or Canarese, and are found in the Chittur and Talappilli Taluks of the State. They are also called *Jadaru* or Jada (great men). Dendra, Devara, Dera, Seniyan, and Sedan. At Coimbatore in the Tamil country, they are called *Settukāran* (economical people).

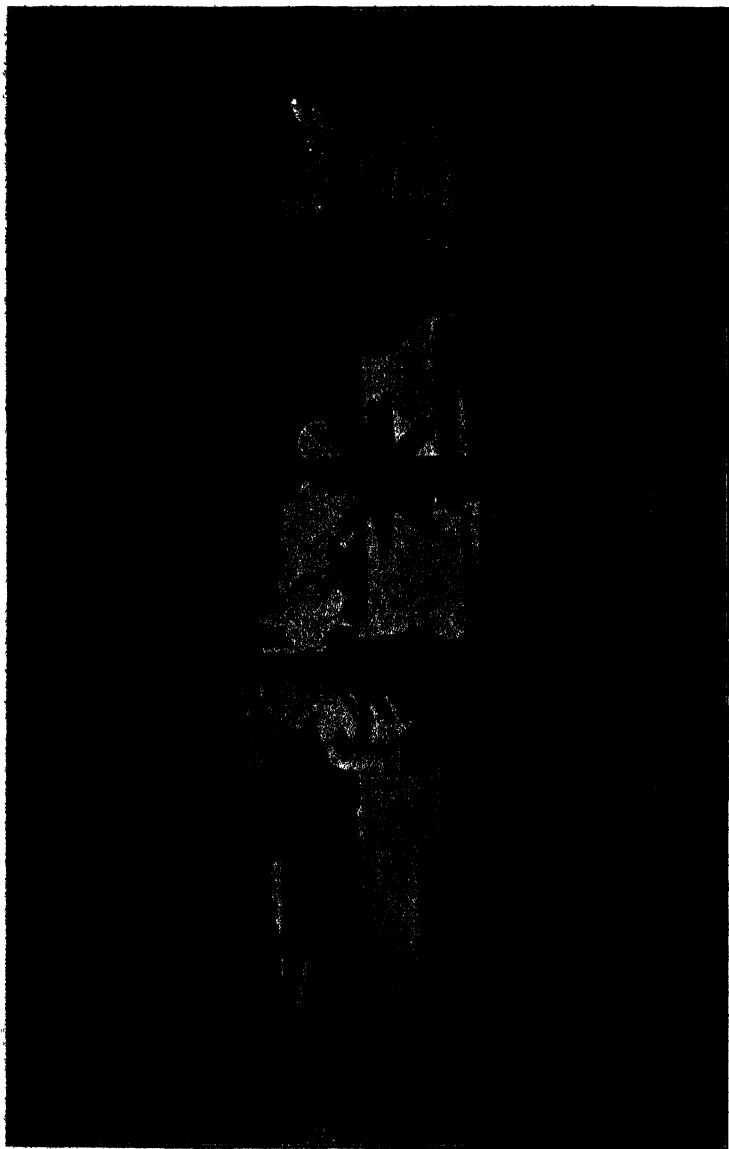
The following legend is narrated concerning the origin of this caste. Brahma, having created Manu, told him to weave

clothes for Devas and men, whereupon Manu did so for some years, and through his piety and virtuous life reached heaven. There being no one left to weave for them, the Devas and men had to wear garments of leaves. Vexed at this, they prayed to Brahma that he would rescue them from their plight, and he took them to Siva who at once created a lustrous spirit and called him Dévalan. Struck with the brilliancy of this spirit, all fled in confusion excepting Pârvati, who remained with Siva. Siva told her that Devalan was created to weave clothes to cover the bodies of Devas and men, whose descendants are in consequence Devangas (*Deva-anga*—limb of Gods). Dévalan was advised to obtain thread from the lotus stalks springing from the navel of Vishnu, and he secured it after a severe penance, but on his way back he met a Rākshasa, Vajradantan by name, who was doing penance at a hermitage disguised as a Sanyasi. Deceived by his appearance, Dévalan paid homage to him and determined to spend the night at the hermitage; but towards the close of the day the *Rishi* and his followers threw off their disguise and appeared in their true colour as Asuras. Dévalan sought the assistance of Vishnu, and a *Chakra* was given to him with which he attempted to overthrow the increasing number of Asuras. He then invoked the assistance of Chandanâyaki or Chandeswari¹, who came riding on a lion and drove off the Asuras. The mighty Asuras who met their death were Vajradanta (diamond toothed), Chitra-senan (leader of armies), and Jayadrathan (owner of a victory-securing car). The blood of these three was coloured respectively yellow, red, white, and green, and Devalan dyed his threads by dipping them in the blood.

There are two sub-divisions among the Devangas or Chédans, the members of one of which speak Canarese and those of the other Telugu, and between them there is neither intermarriage nor interdining.

Marriage is endogamous, and the Devanga girls of both the sections are married both before and after they reach puberty. Further, some among them eat flesh and a girl who belongs to a flesh eating family must abstain from meat, and may not touch any vessel or food in her husband's family till she has reached puberty. Before settling the marriage of a girl the village Goddess Chandeswari

¹. Devanga Puranam.



TELUGU DEVANGA WOMEN AND MEN IN THEIR WORKSHOP.

is consulted and the omens are watched. A lizard chirping on the right is a good omen and on the left bad. Sometimes red and white flowers, wrapped in green leaves, are thrown in front of the idol and the omen is considered good or bad according to the flower which a boy or a girl picks up. Very often the horoscopes of the young man and the girl are examined, and if they are found to agree they are considered eligible for marriage. The marriage ceremony begins with the planting of a bamboo post in the pandal erected in front of the house after propitiating the God Ganapathi. A small branch of the *pála* or milk tree (*Mimusops Hexandra*) is tied to the bamboo post and a small yellow piece of cloth containing pepper and grains is rolled and tied round it. The castemen assembled there are given betel leaves and arecanuts. This takes place on an auspicious day previous to that fixed for the wedding.

On the morning of the wedding day, a few seats made of earth brought from a neighbouring ant-hill are prepared in the pandal, and on these are placed two large pots containing rice and dhol and eight small ones with grains which sprout after being daily moistened with water. A lighted lamp, a vessel of paddy, rice, and a pail full of water are also placed there. A Brahman priest prepares the *Homam* (sacred fire.)

In the early morning the bridegroom gets himself shaved, bathes, and dresses himself like a Brahman bridegroom with a long yellow cloth (*sóman*) and a small one over his shoulders and wears the *Kankanam*. With his party, he goes in procession to the local temple to worship the deity and then arrives at the bride's house where, at the gate, his feet are washed by her brother. He is then conducted to the seat assigned to him. Flat metallic dishes containing cocoanuts, plantains, betel leaves, arecanuts, pepper, and other grains, garlic, the wedding dress and *táli* are brought by the women of his house and placed before him. The bride who is also neatly dressed and decked in her best is conducted to the booth and seated by the side of the bridegroom. The sisters of both wave round their faces a lighted lamp, a vessel of paddy and rice, and a vessel of water to counteract the potency of the evil-eye. The bride then stands up and her father pours water in her palm, and this is allowed to pass into the palm of the bridegroom's father who receives and drinks it. At this time, the bride's father says that he parts with his daughter in marriage to the intended

young man, and the bridegroom's father answers that he accepts her as the wife of his son. After this, the priest gives the *tali* to the bridegroom to be tied round the bride's neck, and the small fingers of the right hands of the contracting parties are brought in contact with each other. They then go round the sacred fire, and seating themselves on a mat, are served with some milk and slices of plantain fruits. The conjugal pair then prostrate themselves before their parents and the other elders assembled there for their blessing. The proceedings conclude with pot-searching. A pap-bowl and ring are put into a pot, and if the bride picks out the bowl, it is believed that her first born will be a girl and if the bridegroom gets hold of the ring, it will be a boy. The guests who attend the ceremony are treated to a feast. On the fifth day a square design is made on the floor with coloured rice. Between the contracting couple and the square a row of lights is placed. Four pots are set, one at each corner of the square, and eight pots arranged along each side thereof. On the square itself two pots representing Siva and Uma are placed with a row of small pots near them. A thread is wound nine times round the pots representing the God and Goddess and tied above to the pandal. After the pots have been worshipped, the thread is cut and worn with the sacred thread for three months. This ceremony is called *Nagavali*. A puja to the posts of the pandal is also made with the offerings of rice and dhol preserved in the pots already mentioned. Widow remarriage is freely allowed. A woman committing adultery with a member of another caste is severely flogged and outcasted.

When a girl reaches puberty, a twig of *Alangium Lamarcki* is placed in the menstrual hut to keep off devils. The pollution lasts for 15 days, and on the morning of the sixteenth she becomes free from it by a bath in a tank or river.

The Devangas follow inheritance in the male line. They have their caste government consisting of the head-man, called *Chettiyar*, and other elderly members of the community who settle all the disputes and levy fines from those who have transgressed the rules of the caste. In rare cases the delinquents are outcasted.

The majority of the D  v  ngas are Sivites, and wear the *Lingam*. They do not wash the stone *Lingam* in which the feet of *Jangams* have been washed. They are particular in always wearing the *Lingam*, for when they are at work, they have to touch all kinds of people. They are Lingayats and have special reverence for Basavana, the sacred bull, and the burying of the Brahmini bull is regarded by them as a sacred and meritorious act¹. Other castes do not regard it as such, though they often set free sacred cows and calves. They have at Kumbhakonam in Tanjore their *guru*, who once in several years sends his agents to receive a small contribution, and when he comes in person, he gives *Upad  sa* (advice). Some have given up the *Linga* and become Vaishnavites. Their chief Goddess is Chandeswari, a form of Kali or Durga, who is worshipped at a festival annually by the entire community.

The dead are generally buried in a sitting posture. Before the grave is filled in, a string is tied to the *Kudimi* (hair knot) of the corpse, and by its means the head is brought near the surface. Over it a *Lingam* is set up and worshipped daily throughout the death ceremonies.

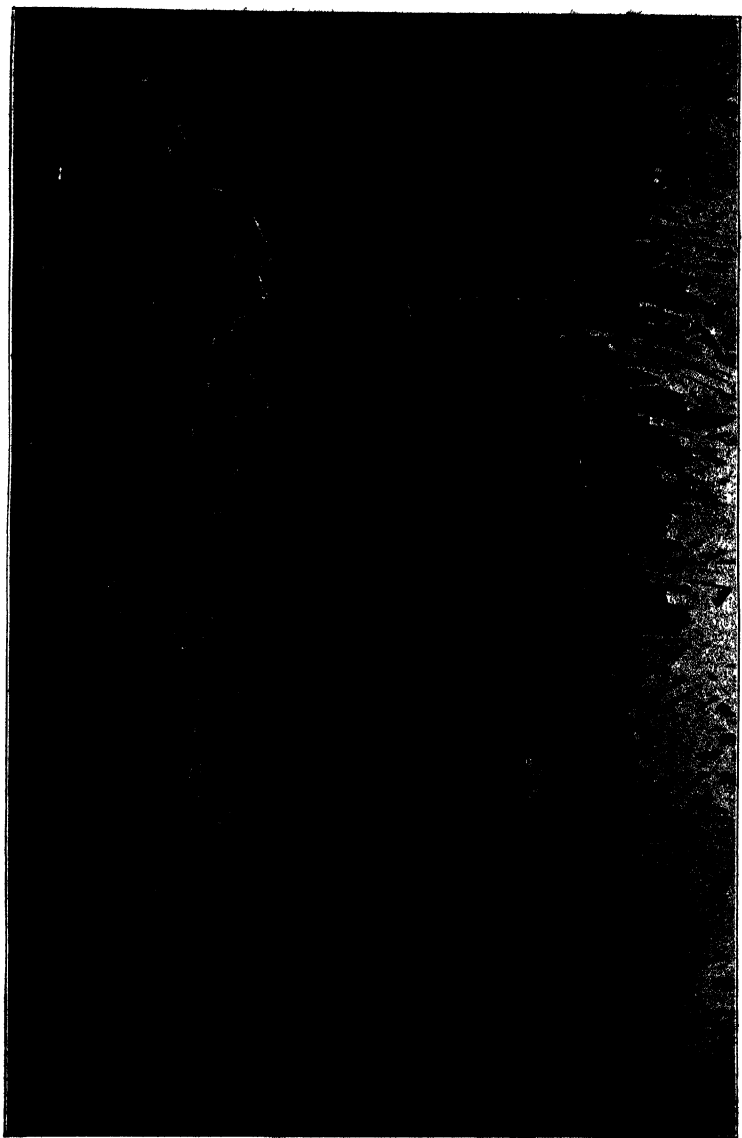
The Devangas have been for a long time following the hereditary occupation of weaving *s  mans* (a kind of cloth with silk or coloured borders, ten cubits in length), and *Shelai* (a piece of cloth 18 cubits in length coloured for women). "They use counts up to hundred's and even higher when there is a demand for the same. They make fine cloths (60 to 100 counts generally) with lace or coloured border and 24 to 50 inches wide. Their finished product *P  vu-mundu* is the fashionable attire of the Malayalis and consequently there is a great demand for it. Their castemen in other villages also make similar cloths, but they seldom use counts higher than 60 for want of a ready sale. Their finished products are sold either locally to merchants coming from other parts or they themselves take them to well-to-do families in the State. The Ch  dars are comparatively a thriving class of weavers who have, of late, taken to financing their industry. They supply the poor weavers with yarn and also make small advances for their maintenance whenever required and they recoupe themselves by buying the finished product at a fair valuation

previously agreed upon. This is practically a system of small factories with men employed on piece wages. The poorest among them are in some cases also employed as journey-men weavers to work the looms of richer weavers. Hence the Chedars, as a class, are able to earn double the wages of Chaliyans and Kaikolans. Almost all the fine cloths with lace or coloured border required for local consumption used to be imported from Tinnevely, but for the last 20 or 25 years the leading families in Cochin began one by one to buy the produce of Kuttampilli and Chittur and especially the former. This preference has given a great impetus to the local industry, and it has reached such a pitch that at the present moment Tinnevely cloths have all but disappeared from the Cochin market.¹

Many of the Devangas are short of stature, light-skinned, with sharp cut features, light brown iris, and delicate tapering fingers. They numbered at the last Census 2,349, (1,176 males and 1,173 females).

KAIKOLAN.

The Kaikolans are a caste of weavers found in the Chittur and Talapilli Taluks of the State, who are immigrants from the Tamil Districts. The word Kaikolan is the Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit *Virabāhu*, a mythological hero from whom both the *Kaikolans* and a section of the *Paraiyans* claim descent. The Kaikolans are also called *Senkundar* (red men armed with dagger) in connection with the following legend. "The people of the earth, being harassed by certain demons, applied to Siva for help. Siva was enraged against the giants and sent forth six sparks of fire from his eyes. His wife, Parvati, was frightened and retired to her chamber and, in so doing, dropped nine beads from her anklets. Siva converted the beads into as many females, to each of whom was born a hero with full grown moustaches and a dagger. These nine heroes with Subramanya at their head marched in command of a large force and destroyed the demons. The Kaikolans or *Senkundar* are said to be the descendants of *Virabāhu*, one of these heroes. After killing the demons, the warriors were told by Siva that they should become musicians and adopt a profession



KAIKKOLANS IN THEIR WORKSHOP.

which would not involve the destruction or injury of any living creature, and weaving being such a profession, they were trained in it¹." According to another version, Siva told Parvati that the world would be enveloped in darkness if he should close his eyes. Impelled by curiosity, Parvati closed her husband's eyes with her hands. Being terrified by the darkness, she ran to her chamber and on the way thither, nine precious stones fell from her anklets and turned into nine fair maidens, with whom Siva became enamoured and embraced them. Seeing later on that they were pregnant, Parvati uttered a curse that they should not bring forth the children formed in their wombs. One Padmasura was troubling the people in this world and on their praying to Siva to help them, he asked Subramanya to kill the Asura. Parvati requested Siva not to send Subramanya by himself, whereupon he suggested the withdrawal of her curse. Accordingly the damsels gave birth to nine heroes, who carrying red daggers and headed by Subramanya went in search of the Asura and killed him. The word *Kaikol* is said to refer to the *Ratna-Vail* or precious dagger carried by Subramanya. The Kaikolans on the *Soora Samharam* day during the festival of Subramanya dress themselves up to represent the nine warriors and join in the procession.

The name Kaikolan is further derived from *Kai* (hand) and *Kol* (shuttle). The Kaikolans consider the different parts of the loom to represent various *dévatās*² and *Rishis*. The thread is said to have been originally obtained from the lotus stalk rising from Vishnu's navel. Several Devas formed the threads which make the warp. Nārada became the woof; and *Vedamuni* the treadle. Brahma transformed himself into the plank (*padamaram*) and Adī-Sesha, the main rope.

The Kaikolans of the Chittur Taluk really form one caste, but there are two sections among them, the members of one of which are somewhat like the Nayars in appearance, while those of the other are like the Tamil Sudras. The former who speak corrupt Tamil which consists largely of Malayalam words are said to belong to the thirty-two families that once immigrated from Conjeevaram, while the latter, who speak pure Tamil, have no such tradition about their settlement in this Taluk.

1. Madras Census Report 1891.

2. Deities.

Among the members of the Nayar-like section there is no inter-marriage between the members who are descended from the same original families. ^{Marriage prohibition.} This appears to be similar to the restrictions among the Nayars. In both sections a young man may marry the daughter of his maternal uncle or parental aunt.

The girls of the Kaikolans are married both before and after puberty. ^{Marriage Customs.} Marriage customs of both the sub-divisions are mostly similar, as will be seen from the following description, where the variations in each case are noted. The parents of a young man who has arrived at the marriageable age select a suitable girl after the due examination and agreement of their horoscopes. If the girl's parents make no objection to the proposed match, a convenient day is selected, when the parents of both together with their relations and friends meet in the house of the girl to settle the conditions and select the auspicious day (*muhúrtam*) on which the wedding is to take place. On the day previous to the wedding, they perform the ceremony of *Ashtamangalyam*, for which the castemen are invited, and in their presence, the girl's father makes the solemn promise of giving his daughter to the intended young man. There is then a liberal distribution of *pan supari* to all those present. This custom is in vogue only among the members of the Nayar-like section. On the morning of the wedding day a bamboo post, which is decorated with the leaves of mango and pipal trees and with *Darbha* grass, and to which a *puja* is performed by a Brahman priest, is fixed in the marriage booth at an auspicious hour. The Tamil Kaikolans tie round it a piece of yellow cloth containing various grains and pulses. A few women of the house bring some earth from a neighbouring ant-hill, with a small portion of which the ground around the post is raised, and with what then remains, beds are prepared for two pots to rest on. These pots which contain water coloured yellow and 8 or 9 small vessels of mud with some grains and pulses in each, are placed in a conspicuous part of the marriage pandal, and to this a *puja* is performed by a Brahman priest, who, after this, prepares the sacred fire (*hómam*). On the morning of the same day the bridegroom gets his face shaved for the first time, bathes and, being neatly dressed and adorned in his best, goes in procession with his parents, relations and friends to the temple to worship the

deity (Ganapathi) and then arrives at the bride's house. As he enters the gate, the bride's brother washes his feet and conducts him to a conspicuous seat in the pandal. Metal trays containing cocoanuts, plantain fruits, betel leaves, arecanuts salt, tamarind, pepper, wedding dress, and the *tali* or marriage badge are carried along with him by the women of his house and placed in the pandal. Then the maternal uncle conducts the bride, who is neatly and beautifully dressed, to the pandal and seats her close to the bridegroom. In another part of the pandal rice is boiled in two earthen vessels by the sisters of the bride and bridegroom. This boiled rice is placed on two plantain leaves to be offered to the image of Ganapathi, who is worshipped by both of them. The above custom is in vogue only among the Tamil Kaikolans. A small thread (*Kankanam*) coloured yellow with turmeric is tied round the wrist of each. The sisters of the conjugal pair take a lamp, a vessel of water and a vessel of rice and paddy, and raising them to the level of their heads, describe a specified number of circles with them in order that they may counteract the influence of the evil-eye. The bride stands facing her father-in-law, and her father then pours water into the bride's palm, and she pours it into that of the bridegroom's father who drinks it. As the father pours the water, he says to the bridegroom's father that he offers his daughter to the selected bridegroom, his son, and the latter answers that he accepts her as his son's wife. This done, the marriage badge is blessed and handed over by the priest to the bridegroom, who ties it round the bride's neck. Their little fingers are then brought in contact with each other, and they go round the fire with pious reverence. They are then seated on mats and given some milk and slices of plantain fruits. A piece of gold and silver and some rice are put into a pot and are well stirred, and the married couple are directed to pick out of it; and as the silver or the gold piece is first picked out, so they will have a son or a daughter born to them. The marriage ceremony for the first day is over, and the guests are treated to a feast. There is nothing further of importance except on the fourth day, when the married couple are seated apart with one end of the bridegroom's cloth touching the bride, and yellow water kept in pots is poured on their heads. Those present are also bathed in the water, and the yellow strings

round the wrists of bride and bridegroom are removed. The pots and other things in the pandal are removed to the neighbouring tank or river, where they are deposited. The marriage couple bathe and return home, and worship the deity in the local temple. The castemen are treated to a grand feast. After this the bridegroom and the bride are seated side by side, and in front of each is placed a metal dish in which are put a few annas, or a rupee or two by the relatives and castemen of each according to their means; and these collections go to the bride and the bridegroom to meet the expenses already incurred by them. Towards the evening the bridegroom returns home in procession along with his bride and her party, where they are all treated to a grand supper. Next morning the married couple are invited to the house of the bride, where the bridegroom and his parents are sumptuously entertained. With a similar feast in the house of the latter to the bride's party, the marriage is brought to a close. The consummation takes place on another auspicious night.

Polygamy is allowed, but polyandry and widow re-marriage are strictly prohibited. All anti-natal and post-natal rites are similar to those in vogue among other Hindu castemen.

The Kaikolans follow inheritance in the male line.

Inheritance. They have their caste assemblies consisting of the elder members of the caste, who meet on occasions concerning the welfare of the caste.

They are Sivites in religion and worship Siva, Parvati or Kamakshi Amman, Ganapathi and Subramanya to whom *pujas* are regularly offered. **Religion.** They also propitiate the local Bhagavati once a year, generally in the month of June, with offerings of sheep, fowl, etc. They are also the worshippers of Sakti and Muni.

The dead bodies of Kaikolans are burned, but those who have died of small-pox, cholera and plague are generally buried. **Funeral ceremonies.** The chief mourner is the son, and the pollution lasts for ten days. The agnates bathe on the eleventh day and become free from pollution by taking a dose of *Punyaham* (sanctified water). On the 12th day, the chief mourner offers the funeral oblations to the spirit of the departed and also treats the castemen to a feast.

“ Like the Devangas, the Kaikolans are hereditary cotton weavers, who use the country pit looms; not one of them employs looms with fly-shuttle arrangements. The warp is prepared generally by women and children, and in the matter of sizing which requires the service of more than one individual, the weavers in the same neighbourhood assist each other. The Kaikolans weave only coarse cloths and do not use counts beyond twenty. Their looms are narrow and cloths wider than thirty inches are seldom turned out. The coarse cloths made by them find a ready sale in the local markets as they are much in demand among the poor classes. The Kaikolans are, with half a dozen exceptions, poor, and have no means of purchasing the yarn required for their looms. They get advance from the dealers and undertake to sell their finished products to the latter at a pre-arranged rate. Their earnings are so slender owing to this and to competition that a few days' illness of the working member of a family reduces it to starvation. A man, a woman, and a boy can, between them, earn only four to six annas a day, which is less than the wages of common agricultural labourers. Notwithstanding their rooted conservatism, therefore, some of them have altogether abandoned the industry and taken to agriculture, while more of them are trying to combine it with other occupations, such as vending groceries, husking paddy, etc. ”

The male members of one section are like the Nayars wearing *Mundus* and small upper garments. They grow an oval patch of hair which is tied into a knot on the top of the head. Their women wear an ordinary red or white loin cloth which is about six yards in length and is folded twice. The hair on the head is parted and tied into a knot behind. The Tamil Kaikolans are like the Tamil Sudras. The former, like the Chilians and Tarakans, are half Nayar-like to serve their own ends, while the latter still stick to their old habits.

They numbered at the last Census 4,121, (2,011 males and 2,110 females).

KAKKALANS.

The Kakkalans are a vagrant tribe found all over the State and are identical with the Kakka-kuravans. There are among

them two endogamous divisions called *Kāvitiyan* and *Māni-parayan*, and these are known as Meluthon and Cháttaparayan in the Chittur and Talapilli Taluks of the State. The Kavitiyans are further divided into Kollam (Quilon) Kavitiyan, Malayalam-Kavitiyan, and Pandi-Kavitiyans, the last being old immigrants from the Pandiyan country.

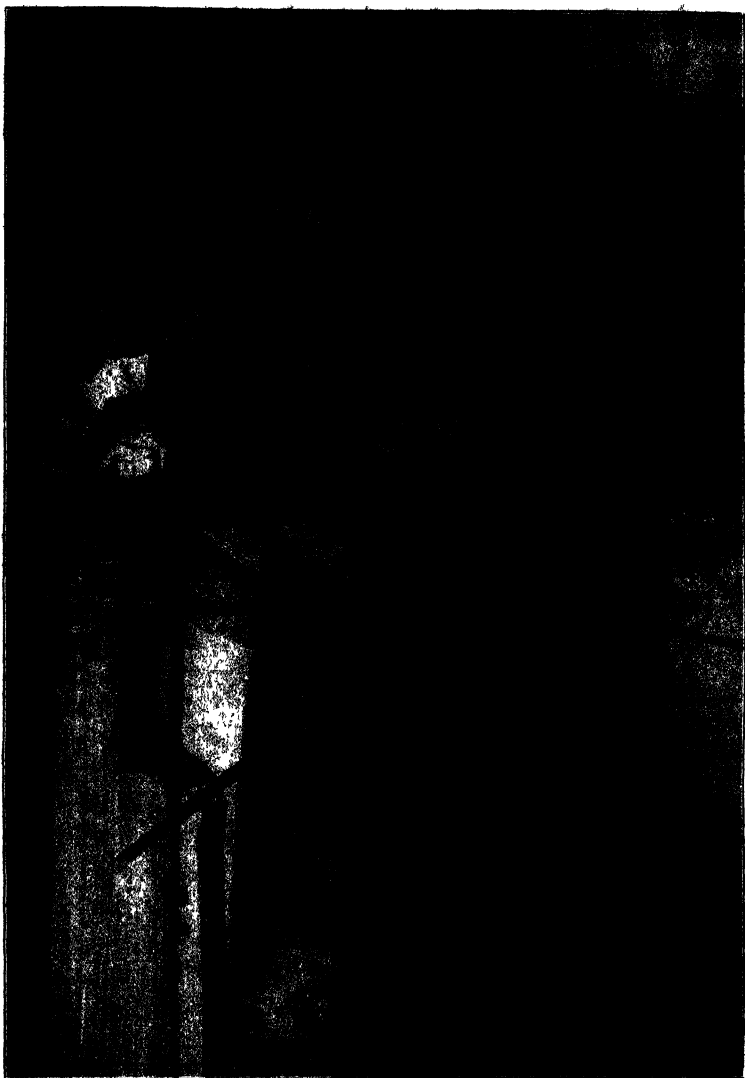
The Kákkálans have a legend concerning their origin to the effect that Siva was once going about begging as a Kápala-Dhárin and arrived at a Brahman street, from which the inhabitants drove him away. The offended God reduced the village to ashes, and the guilty villagers begged his pardon, but were reduced to the position of the Kákkálans, and made to earn their livelihood by begging.

Though, in the presence of other castemen, the Kákkálans speak Malayalam, they have a peculiar language of their own, which is not easily understood by others.

The Kákkálans of Trichur generally intermarry with those in Palghat and other places but not with those beyond Irinjalakuda. A young man may marry the daughter of his maternal uncle or the daughter of his paternal aunt.

When a young man is to be married, his father and maternal uncle go in search of a suitable girl and when she is selected, they negotiate with her father and maternal uncle. If the latter agree, the friends and relations on both sides meet together in the house of the girl, when they formally talk over the matter and settle the bride's price, which varies from 120 to 360 *fanams*, a fanam being equal to four annas and seven pies. The castemen assembled in the bride's house are then entertained at the expense of the bridegroom. A day is also fixed for the celebration of the marriage, and on that day the bridegroom's party assemble at the house of the bride, and his sister dresses the bride with the wedding costumes brought by her, after which the *táli* is tied round the girl's neck at an auspicious hour, generally at sunrise. The bridegroom's party are then entertained, after which either the bridegroom's *Enangan* or his uncle says that they purchase the girl at a cost of so many fanams and that they give so much of it then with a promise to give the balance on demand thereafter. The girl's uncle and father hand over

KAKKALANS-GRASS MAT-MAKERS-AND THEIR WOMEN IN WORKSHOP.



the bride on receipt of the sum and consent to receive the balance as promised.

In some cases if ready-money or a portion of it is not paid, a document is received instead before the girl is handed over. As soon as this is done, either on the same day or on the next, the bride is taken to the house of the bridegroom, where the bride's party are sumptuously entertained. The binding portion of the ceremony consists in their eating together from the same vessel. In some places the married couple are seated side by side, and the elderly women of the family give them some milk and slices of plantain fruits which is called *Madhuram Kotukkal* or giving of sweets. Then the bride and the bridegroom go to the house of the former, where they stay for a few days.

In cases where the bride's price or a portion of it is not paid as promised, the amount received is returned, and the woman is sold to another member of the caste. Any child born of the earlier union remains with its father. If this be a girl, half the bride's price goes to the mother at her marriage.

In the Talapilli and Chittur Taluks, the first marriage must be celebrated on a Sunday, and the festivities last from Saturday to Monday. Subsequent marriages may be celebrated on a Thursday. On the night of the day before the wedding, a brother or other near relation of the bridegroom places the *Sambandham* alliance by bringing a *Fanam* (coin) worth of material for chewing, and cooked rice to the marriage pandal (*booth*). Fruits and other things are flung at him by the bride's people. On the following day the bridegroom arrives at the pandal, and after raising the *tali* (marriage badge) three times towards Heaven and invoking a blessing from on-high, ties it round the bride's neck.

When a girl comes of age, she is lodged in a separate room and three or four other girls are kept with her during the days of her pollution. The girl is purified by a bath either on the seventh or the eleventh day, when the castemen in the neighbourhood are treated to a feast. During the menses the girl is given a little oil mixed with turmeric and the white of egg, and is fed with rice during these days. If the girl is believed to be under demoniacal influence,

Puberty-customs.

a Pánan is sent for, who, by his exorcism, sets her free from such attacks.

The Kákkalans are conspicuously polygamous, and some have as many as six or seven wives who support themselves by their professional engagements (palmistry) and begging for alms. Among them, generally speaking, the women support their husbands. A woman, who becomes a widow, is at liberty to marry her brother-in-law, who must be her senior in age. In the event of her intention to marry another, the bride's price must be returned to her deceased husband's family.

Soon after delivery both the mother and the baby are bathed. The woman is fed with rice-gruel and with cocoanut shavings and afterwards with boiled rice. On the fourth day she is given a dose of a mixture of sugar and dried ginger, and this is continued for the next three days, and afterwards with other similar medicines. The expenses connected with it are defrayed by her husband.

Among the Kakkalans inheritance is from father to son. A childless widow is a copartner with the brothers of the deceased. They have also the rudiments of caste government.

They profess the low form of Hinduism. Their chief deity is Bhagavati, whom they worship and to whom offerings of sheep, fowls, etc., are made in Karkitagom (July-August) and Thulam (October-November). Sometimes their Gods are located underneath a tree in their own compound where a floor is raised and a shed put up on the auspicious days in the year, and where offerings are made. They worship the spirits of the departed, and to them offerings are made on certain auspicious nights. They also worship some demoniacal Gods, namely, Mundiyan, Chàttan, Kantakaranan and Kappiri. When their dyes become spoiled, when they meet with snakes in the forests, or when they go for grass, they worship Mallan, their sylvan deity, and offerings are made to him with the help of a Vèlan. They worship the rising Sun, to which boiled rice is offered on Sundays. They have no temples of their own but stand at some distance from the Hindu temples and worship the Gods therein. Though leading a wandering life, they try to be at home for the Malabar New Year, on which occasion they wear new cloths and hold a feast. They do not observe the national *Onam* and *Vishu* festivals however. They

also worship in Christian churches and light a candle in honour of the divinity.

The dead bodies are generally buried. The son is the chief mourner. Pollution lasts for fifteen days. The *Enangan* performs the priestly functions.

Funeral customs.

The Kakkálans make excellent mats from grass (*Cynoporus* *Corymborus*) which they generally obtain from the neighbourhood of marshy places in the forest, and split it into four, seven, or eight fibres and remove the pith. These fibres are then dried in the sun and after being well-soaked in water and dried become white. They prepare several vegetable dyes in large earthen pots, in which they arrange the piles of grass fibres over which they sprinkle the dying powder and again pile up the grass and boil the vessels consecutively for three days, alternately drying and placing the bundles of grass fibres in the various vegetable dyes. Red dyes are prepared from Chappangam (*Cæsalpinia sappan*) and the dry leaves of *kasa*, both of which are powdered after drying. The yellow colour is obtained by dipping the red fibres in water in which powdered turmeric has been dissolved. Black dyes are prepared either by placing the fibres in mud or in a vessel containing a liquid mixture of gall-nut and ferrous sulphate. The grass thus dyed is woven into fine mats of various dimensions, and patterns in looms similar to the ordinary cottage looms, hemp yarn being used as warps and dyed splits as wefts. There is no limit to the length, but as the blades of grass seldom grow longer than three or four feet, they cannot generally be made to exceed a yard in breadth. The industry is still primitive and requires organization. The mats thus made vary in price according to their size and quality, the finer ones costing twenty-five rupees and the coarser ones from one to five rupee. A Kakkálan and his wife working steadily could easily make over 20 rupees monthly; but they seldom make five. They too lead a vagrant life. The women are said to be proficient in palmistry. There is a tradition that a woman of the caste predicted to the wives of Dasaratha, regarding the birth of Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Satrugna. Some Kakkálans tame snakes and monkeys, while others make beds and pillows for low caste men. Some again do agricultural work and earn a few annas a day. Other occupations of women

Occupation.

include 1. *Kāthukuttu* or boring the lobes of the ears, 2. *Kātu-vaippu*-plastic operation of the ear which the Nayar women and others who wear heavy pendants ear ornaments often require, 3. *Kompu-vaippu* or placing the twigs of a plant on any swelling of the body and dissipating it by blowing on it, 4. *Taiyyal* (tailoring), 5. *Panpatam* (snake dance), 6. fortune telling. The Kakkālans are, in short, a lazy, wandering people preferring to eke out their livelihood by snake charming and fortune telling.

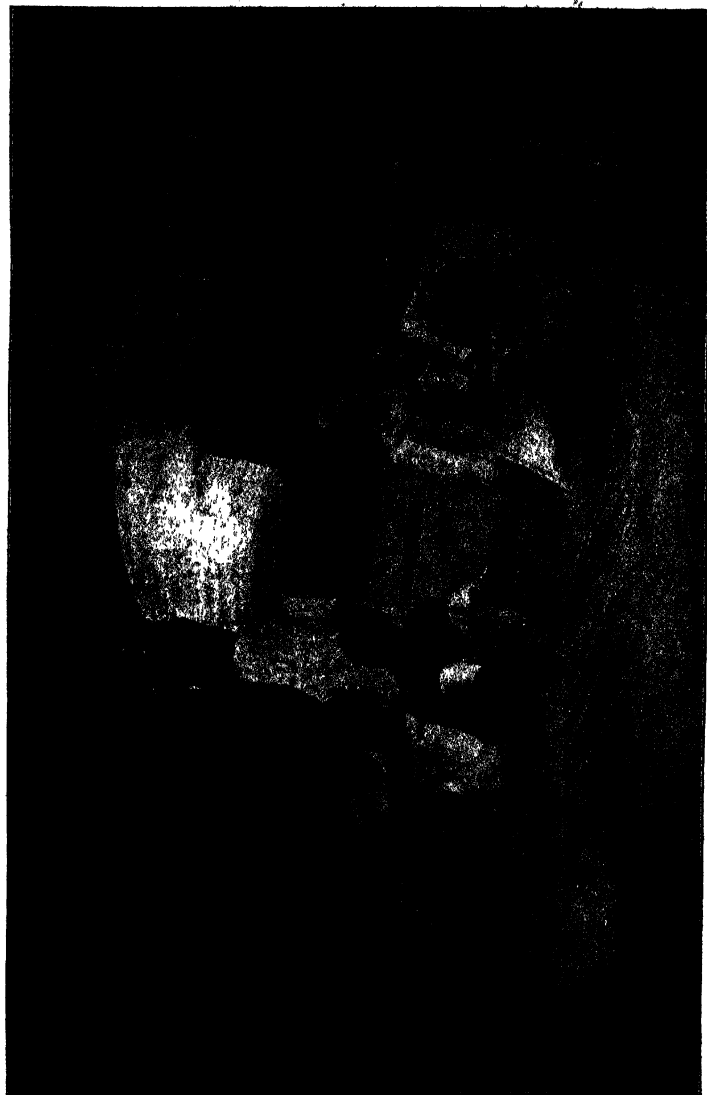
A man for this is well trained during his boyhood between ten and twelve years of age. A mixture of
Rope-Dancing. gingelly oil, castor oil, and the oil of the margosa seed is well prepared, and with this mixture he is well shampooed for fourteen days and bathed in hot water. After this a strong rope is tied between two poles, on which the beginner is made to walk, holding the hands of a person who walks on the ground. Then he is made to walk alone. In the course of three months or so he becomes clever enough to perform various feats and for one performance he gets ten to twelve rupees.

Kakkalans bathe when polluted by Parayans and Nayadis ;
Social Status. and they pollute by touch almost every high caste man. They are their own barbers and washermen. The women wear iron and silver bangles and a *Palunkumāla* or necklace of variously coloured beads. They tatoo their arms. They numbered 682 at the last Census, 323 males, and 359 females.

KAVARAS.

This is a Tulu caste found in the Chittur Taluk of the Cochin State. They speak a mutilated form of Tulu.

The girls are married both before and after puberty.
Marriage Customs. Among relations a young man may marry the daughter of his maternal uncle. When a young man approaches the marriageable age, his brother or uncle selects a suitable girl for him after payment of two *fanams* to the parents of the girl. In the event of the willingness of the latter a formal arrangement is made in the presence of a few of their castemen, and an auspicious day for the wedding is also fixed. A sum of 35 *fanams* is also paid to the girl's parents for the expenses of the wedding. On that auspicious day the bridegroom goes to the bride's house with two pieces of



KAVARAS WITH THEIR WICKER-WORK.

cloth, three measures of rice, a *tali*, and two cocoanuts. A *puja* to Ganapathi is then performed, when an elderly member gives the *tali* with the flower to the bridegroom, who ties it round the neck of the girl. There is a feast for those who have accompanied them to the wedding. The ceremony lasts for two more days in the bride's house and for two more days in the house of the bridegroom. Twenty days after this the nuptials are performed in the bridegroom's house, when a few of the castemen are treated to a feast.

When a woman is about to become a mother, she is lodged in a separate hut for the delivery. One or two of her relatives may stay with her and act as mid-wives. Soon after delivery she is bathed and the woman is allowed to take no food on the day of delivery. She is generally fed on rice-gruel or boiled rice, and a mixture of pepper, turmeric, garlic, and asafoetida well dried and powdered and boiled in water to which some toddy is also added. A small quantity of this is given her both in the morning and in the evening for twenty days. Though she bathes every three days, yet she is under pollution for 28 days and is purified by a bath on the 29th day, when her temporary residence is burnt and reduced to ashes. The woman and her baby are then out of pollution, and a few of their castemen are treated to a feast. The naming ceremony takes place during the sixth month.

Kavaras are strictly monogamous. They have also the rudiments of caste government which deals with all matters connected with the well-being of the caste.

The inheritance is in the male line.

They are animists to a certain extent and their chief Gods
 Religion. are Kantakaranan, Muni, and the spirits of the departed, who are all located in one room and to whom they offer sacrifices once a year at least or as often as their means allow. They also worship Bhagavati.

The dead are generally buried. The son is the chief
 Funeral Customs. mourner and performs the ceremony. The pollution lasts for 15 days and the agnates are purified by a bath on the sixteenth day.

They make wicker work of all kinds. The men bring
 Occupation. the bamboo and make every thing ready for their women to make wicker-work.

Social Status. They eat the food of the Brahmans and the high class Nayers; but do not eat at the hands of other caste men. These people pollute by touch the

Kakkalans but are polluted by the touch of Panans, Pulayans, Cherumans and other low caste men (at a distance). They are their own barbers and washermen. They are clothed very scantily and the males very seldom shave their heads.

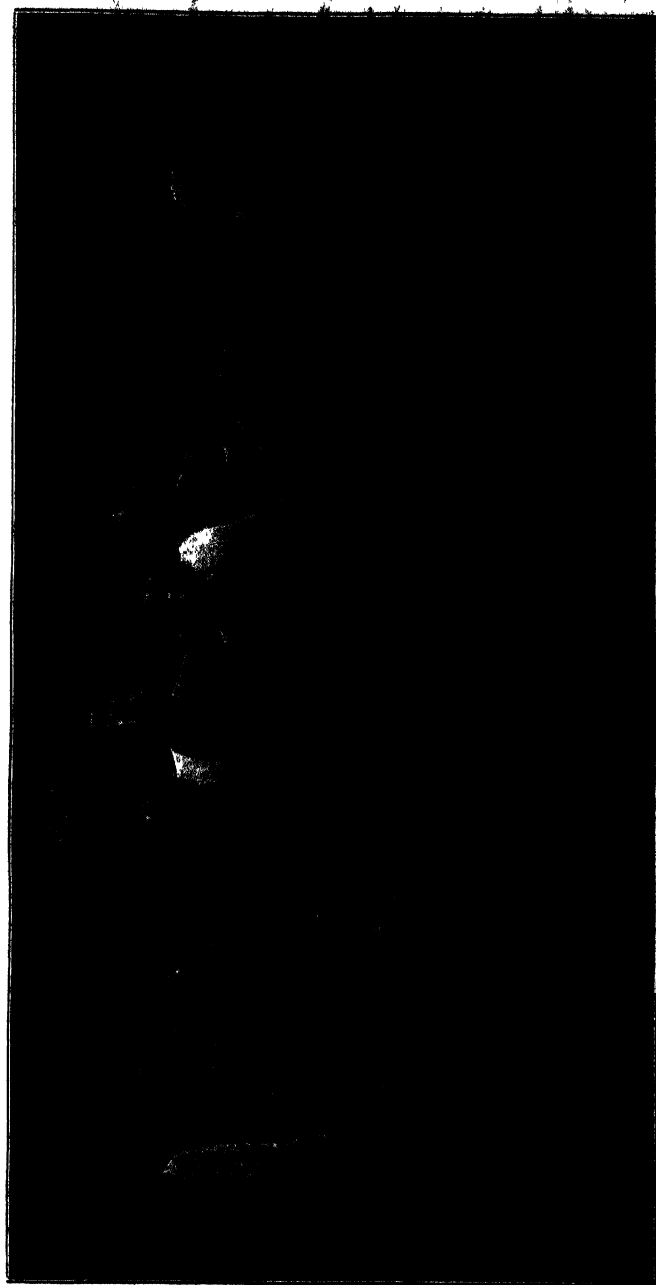
They numbered 474 at the last Census, 240 being males, and 234 females.

KUDUMI CHETTI.

The Kudumi Chetties are the Konkani Sudras, who are also known as Kudumikkar or Goa Chetties. They are the domestic servants of the Konkani Brahmans, in whose midst they are invariably found; and their settlement in the State is cœval with that of other immigrants from the Konkana districts. They are found mostly in the Southern Taluks. At the last Census, they numbered 12,371, 6,500 being males, and 5,871 females. They speak a somewhat corrupt form of the Konkani dialect of Marathi.

Sub-divisions of the caste. Among the Kudumi Chetties there are four sub-divisions (Nari, Gathali, Kshatri and Gauthingri) which are really exogamous septs, the members of which interdine, but do not intermarry.

Marriage customs. The girls of the Kudumi Chetties are married before they come of age; and their weddings, which last for seven days, are celebrated either in the bride's house or in that of the bridegroom. The bride's price is fifteen fanams (Rs. 4-4-6); and after marriage, they reside with their husbands in their houses. When a girl comes of age, she is under seclusion for six days, and on the morning of the seventh day she is purified by a bath, when the castemen who are invited are treated to a feast. Nuptials are performed on any auspicious day in the house of the bridegroom. Polygamy is allowed, but polyandry is unknown. Though widow-marriage is not common, widows are kept as concubines without entailing any social excommunication. A Kudumi Chetti woman after childbirth is in confinement for twenty-eight days, while her husband observes pollution for only seven days. Among the Kudumi Chetties inheritance is in the male line. They have the rudiments of caste government in



A GROUP OF KUDIMI CHETTIES

which the headman and the elderly ~~members~~ take part and settle all social disputes.

They are Vaishnavites and adore Krishna. *Bhagavathi* is also their tutelary deity, and the day on which the Bharani asterism falls is one of great festivity.

The dead bodies are either burned or buried. The son is the chief mourner and the pollution lasts for fifteen days, and on the sixteenth day the members of the family and the agnates are purified by a bath and the sprinkling of water consecrated by a Brahman priest or from the well of a Konkani temple. They have their own priests for ceremonial purposes.

The Kudumi Chetties possess an uncommon capacity for continued hardwork. They are agricultural labourers, boatmen and porters. They clean tanks, wells and thatch houses.

Animal food and drinks are tabooed. Their dress and ornaments are peculiar. Garlands of coral and red beads called *palunku* form their necklets. Half jackets are not worn. Their favourite amusement is the *kolati*, for which ten or twelve stand in a circle with a stick in hand, a cubit long, and sing in praise of Krishna and Bhagavathi, striking the several sticks against one another so as to keep time with their joyous music. The Kudumi Chetties form an illiterate community in the State.

KUMBARAN.

Kumbarans, otherwise called in Telugu Kummaravadu, are a Telugu caste of potters found in small communities in the Trichur and Mukundapuram taluks of the State. They are mostly immigrants from the Tamil districts of Trichinopoly and Madura. The word is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word Kumba-kara (maker of pots), though in social position, they are considered to be a superior class of Sudras. The story concerning the origin of the potter-classes is that they are descended from a Brahman father and a Sudra mother, for the sacrificial earthen vessels which are now made by them are, according to the Vedas, intended to be made by the priests themselves.

The Kumbaran girls are married both before and after puberty. Marriage ceremonies, which are similar to those of the Tamil Sudras, are performed in the bridegroom's house. The bride's price is 75 fanams (Rs. 21-6-10). The bridegroom is the tali-tier and the marriage ceremonies last for four days, during which friends and relations are entertained. Their caste-headman Pattakkàran officiates as the priest in this and other ceremonies.

Should a married girl become a widow, she may mate with another, but she cannot wear the *tali*. A man may marry two or three women at a time, but no woman can have more than one husband.

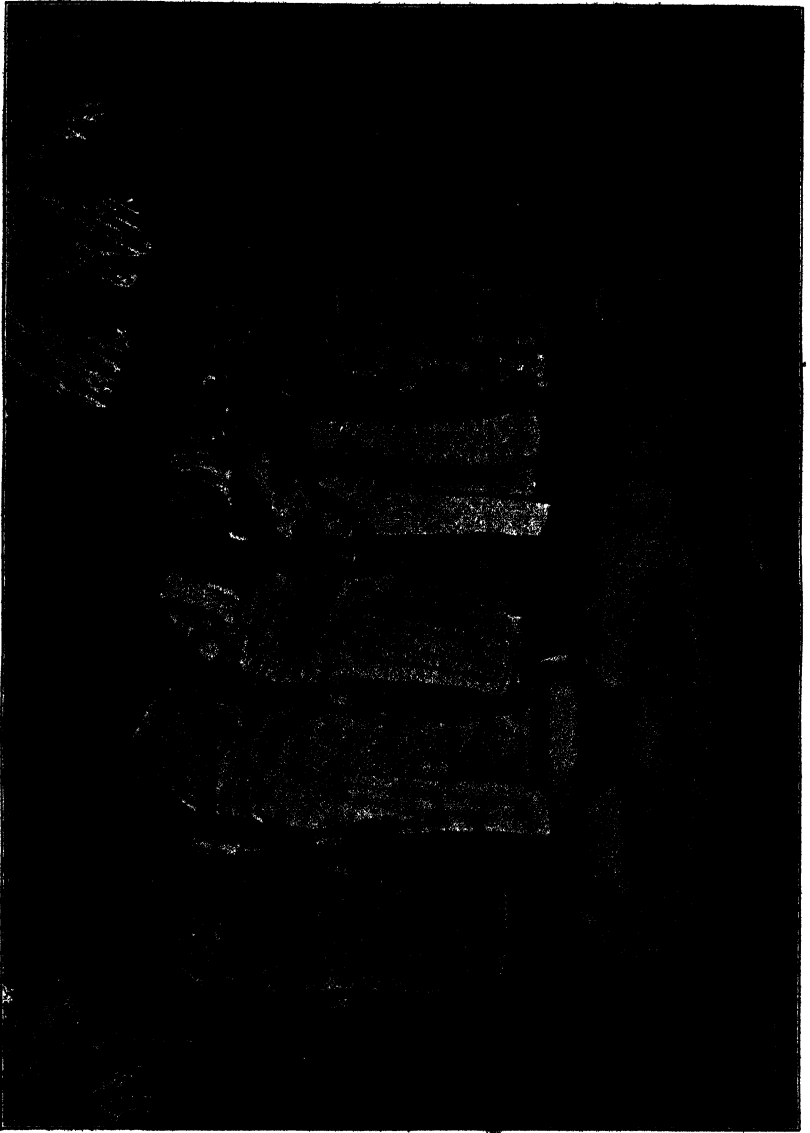
There are four functionaries—I. Pattakàran; 2. Chettikkaran, a member below him who executes the orders of the officer above him; 3. Thalikkaran, who has to discharge the duties of a Cheetayan among the Nayars, *i. e.*, to sweep and clean the house and the surroundings of his castemen after birth and death pollution. (His status is said to be a little lower than that of the others because of his menial service); 4. Yôgakkaran, whose duties consist in convening meetings in matters connected with the well-being of the caste.

For all caste-disputes and the like, the important members of the community meet under the orders of the Pattakàran. The matter is then discussed, and they come to a conclusion either one way or the other.

Their birth and death pollutions last for 15 days, at the end of which they have their house well swept, cleaned and sprinkled with water. The polluted members or agnates are purified by a bath, and a dose of sanctified water is then taken.

These Telugu potters are generally Vaishnavites, but they adore the demon-Gods, namely, Mâri-Amman and Karupparayan, to whom sheep and fowls are sacrificed in the first of Thulam, Makaram and Medam. They are also ancestor worshippers. With regard to the social status the castemen eat the food of the Brahmans, Ambalavasis, and Nayars.

The potter's apparatus is a simple, circular, horizontal, well-balanced, fly-wheel, generally four or five feet in diameter, which can be made to rotate for two or three minutes by a



slight impulse. This the potter loads with clay and then with a few easy sweeps and turns of his hands, he moulds his material into beautiful curves and symmetrical shapes and leaves the products of his skill to bake in the Sun. His implements are very few and his mode of working very simple. The wheel is a clumsily constructed and defective apparatus and is composed of several pliable pieces of wood or bamboo bent and tied together in the form of a wheel. This is covered over thickly with clay mixed with goat's hair or any fibrous substance. The four spokes on the centre of which the vessel rests are of wood, and the pivot is of hard wood or steel. The support for the wheel consists of a rounded mass of clay and goat's hair in which is embedded a piece of hard wood or stone, with one or two slight depressions for the axle or pivot to move in. The wheel is set in motion first by the hand, and then spun rapidly by the aid of a long piece of bamboo, one end of which fits into a slight depression on the wheel. Many are the defects of this apparatus. The potter has to stoop over it. It has a tendency to wave or wobble and owing to the imperfect axle much time is wasted in spinning it, yet in spite of the rudeness and imperfection of the machine, the potters are expert in throwing and some of their small wares are thin and delicate. The only articles manufactured in the State under the head of pottery are the common earthen vessels for the domestic use of the poorer classes. Bricks and tiles are also made by them. They have no idea of the art of glazing or colouring of pottery. During the rainy season they cannot turn out much work, and most of them combine other work with their hereditary occupation.

The potters bake their wares in the following manner:—A circular slab about 10 feet in diameter is marked out on the ground in any convenient open spot. Small pieces of wood and dried sticks are spread on the space to a depth of about six inches, and a layer of *brātis* (dried cow-dung cakes) laid over the sticks. The vessels are then carefully piled on the top of this platform of fuel to a height of about five feet, and the whole is covered over with straw and plastered with clay, leaving a few small openings here and there to allow the smoke to escape. These arrangements being completed, the fuel at the bottom is lighted, and in the course of a few hours, the process of baking is completed. In ancient days the potters made sepulchral

urns of a large pyramid shape, and which have in recent times been excavated in Tinnevely, Madura, Malabar and elsewhere. Dr. G. U. Pope shows that these urns are mentioned in connection with the burial of heroes and kings as late as the eighth century A. D., and renders one of the Tamil songs bearing on the subject as follows :—

“ Oh ! potter chief - - what toil hath befallen thee ?

The descendant of the Chera Kings ---

Hath gained the world of Gods. And so

'Tis thine to shape an urn so vast

That it shall cover the remains of such an one ! ”

Of late they have been taking more and more to agriculture, as the demand for their goods has been on the decrease. With the growing prosperity of the people, copper, bell-metal, and enamelled vessels are taking the place of earthen vessels, while the making of bricks and tiles has been taken out of their hands almost entirely by the new tile factories. Still, the industry is not likely to become extinct so long as there are poor people and so long as cheap earthen vessels are required on occasions of feasts and festivals. But their remuneration at the best of times is meagre—two to three annas a day on an average.

In the Tamil districts they bathe early and do their work. Women assist men in their work.

ODDEN.

Oddens, called also Voddens, are a Telugu people who originally came from Orissa. The word ‘Vodde’ or ‘Odde’ is said to be a corruption of the Sanskrit Odra, the name of the country now called Orissa. They are found all over the Presidency, especially in the Districts of Nellore, Coimbatore, Madura, Tinnevely, Kurnool, and in the Province of Mysore, to which they must have come from Orissa in the time of the Nayakkans. Very probably the Oddens are the descendants of those who are said to have accompanied Hyder and Tippu as pioneers in their invasions of Malabar and Cochin: for, the places where they now reside are called *Kootarams* (tents). On my enquiry, some say that their ancestors came from the districts of Madura and Tinnevely.

The following tradition is ascribed to the origin of this caste. Once when Siva and Parvati were walking on a sultry day upon the earth, they

Origin of the Caste.



got very hot and thirsty. The drops of perspiration which fell from Siva were changed by him into a man with a pick and crow-bar; while those that fell from Parvati turned into a woman carrying a basket. The man and the woman quickly sank, while with the cooling waters the God and Goddess refreshed themselves, and in gratitude, promised the labourers certain gifts, the nature of which is not now known; but neither was satisfied and both grumbled, and this so incensed Siva that he cursed them, and vowed that they and their descendants should live by the sweat of their brow.

They generally live in flimsy huts, but some have become comparatively rich and live in tolerably well built houses.

There are eighteen exogamous sects, but they are not able to give their names.

When a girl reaches puberty, she is confined in a special hut, in which a piece of iron, margosa leaves (*Melia Azadirachta*), sticks of strychnos, Nux Vomica, and the arka plant (*calotropis-Gigantia*) are placed to ward off evil spirits. For fear of these spirits, she is not allowed to eat meat, though eggs are permitted. On the seventh day a fowl is killed, waved in front of the girl and thrown away. At the end of the period of pollution, the hut is burnt down. Sometimes when the girl bathes on the first day, a sieve is held over her head and water is poured through it. In some places, on the eleventh day, chicken broth mixed with arrack (liquor) is administered in order to make the girl's back and waist strong. The hen from which the broth is made must be a black one, and she must have laid eggs for the first time. The flesh is placed in a mortar, pounded to a pulp, and boiled with the addition of condiments and finally arrack. The pollution lasts for fifteen days, and there is no feast on the following day when the girl bathes to become pure.

Both infant and adult marriages are in vogue among them.

At the most elaborate ceremonies, on the betrothal day, the bride's price, thirty rupees and thirty paras of paddy worth fifteen rupees, is paid and a present of three rupees is also made to her mother. Besides these payments, the castemen of the village have to receive from the bridegroom twelve rupees with which and similar savings made during the year they celebrate a feast on the *Pongal*

festival in Makaram (January-February). The wedding generally takes place at seven or eight o'clock in the evening. There is no tali-tying. The linking of the little finger by the conjugal pair forms the binding portion of the ceremony. Should a young woman be married a second time after the death of her husband, the ring fingers of the contracting couple have to be linked. An Odden woman after the death of her husband can marry as many times as she likes, and each wedding is solemnised by the contact of another finger. After this ceremony the bridegroom and his party are treated to a feast. The next day the bride is taken to the house of the bridegroom, where the bride's party are treated.

They follow inheritance in the male line.

They worship with equal reverence Siva and Vishnu in their various manifestations and offer *pujas* to them on the auspicious days of *Sivarátri*, *Navarátri*, and *Vishu*. Hanumán is also one of their favourite deities. Minor deities to whom goats and sheep are sacrificed are also held in veneration.

Religion.

The dead are generally buried. By some the dead body is wrapped up in a new cloth and carried by four men to the burial ground. On their way to the grave the corpse is laid on the ground and rice thrown over its eyes. It is then washed and the forehead is painted either with the *Namam* (Vaishnavite sect mark) or *Vibhúti* (sacred ashes), and *Kunkumam* in the case of a female. Earth is thrown in the grave before it is filled in by those assembled. The son is the chief mourner, who makes offerings to the spirits of the departed, and pollution lasts for fifteen days. On the last day of the death ceremonies, they repair to a tank or well outside the village. An effigy is made with mud to which cooked rice, etc., is offered. Some rice is placed on an *arka* leaf as an offering to the crows. If a married woman has died, the widower cuts through his waist thread, whereas a widow after her husband's death is taken to a watery edge and sits in a winnow. Her bangles are broken and water is poured over her head three times through the winnow. After bathing, she goes and sits in a room with a lamp and may see no one till the following morning. She is then taken to one or more temples and made to pull the tail of a cow three times.

Funeral customs.

Occupation. The Oddens are an itinerant caste of tank-diggers and earth workers. They are a strong and hard-working class, but also drunken, gluttonous, and vicious. Very little faith can be placed in their most solemn promises. They will take advances from half a dozen employers within a week, and work for none of them, if they can help it.

They work in gangs in contract; and every man except the very old and the very young takes a share in the work. The women carry the earth in baskets and the men use the pick-axe and the spade, while the babies are tied up in cloths which are suspended in hammock fashion from the boughs of trees.

In the State they are generally engaged in digging tanks and wells, road construction, and in the improvement of waste lands, gardening, and all kinds of work which demands the labour of strong men, accustomed to the use of crow-bar, pick-axe, and powder.

Personal adornment. The women wear bracelets. Tattooing on the fore-head with a central vertical line is universally practised, because, according to them, they should wear tattoo marks as a proof of their life on earth when they die.

They numbered 2,066 at the last Census, 1,032 being males and 1,034 females.

OTAN.

The Otans are a class of potters who were originally Tamil Sudras, but are now like the low caste Nayars in appearance. They are found mostly in the Thalapilli and Chittur Taluks of the State. They speak Malayalam interspersed largely with Tamil words.

Marriage Customs. The girls of the Otans are married both before and after puberty. A young man who wishes to marry a girl goes with his parents, friends, and relations to her house. The girl, neatly dressed in a cloth which he has brought, has the *tali* (marriage badge) tied round her neck by the bridegroom at the auspicious hour, which is generally some time in the evening. The guests who are invited are then treated to a feast at the expense of the bridegroom. Next morning after a similar feast at the expense of the bride's party,

the bridegroom returns to his own house with the bride and her party who are entertained by him.

The marriage customs above described are like those prevailing among the castemen in the Trichur and Mukundapuram Taluks. Dwelling in the midst of the Nayar community, they have adopted some of their customs after throwing aside the old Tamil marriage and other customs. On the other hand, their brethren in the Chittur Taluk still retain the Tamil customs owing to their close contact with the Tamil Sudras, and their marital relations are described below.

Girls are married both before and after puberty, and the ceremonies connected with the wedding are performed either in the house of the bride or in that of the bridegroom. The general items of the ceremonies are the preliminary negotiations and settlement, the planting of posts for the marriage booth at an auspicious hour, the planting of the Muhurta-kal (decorated post), the placing of pots and other small vessels with seedlings, the preparation of the *homam* (sacred fire) by a Brahman priest, the clasping of the bride's hand, the treading on the mortar, the looking at the Ursa Major, the going round the fire, paying obeisance to the elders. The guests assembled are treated to a feast. There is nothing of importance on the second and third days, and on the morning of the fourth day, the bridegroom and the bride are seated together in the pandal, and blessed by those assembled while the string round the wrist is also untied. A doll in the form of a child is then exchanged, saying that it is begotten on her. Each of them is given to eat a little rice dyed yellow with turmeric, and then one end of the cloth, which he wears, is tied to a corner of her dress, and some water coloured yellow is poured over them. A pot of water with a piece of gold and silver is placed in front of the bridal pair, and they are directed to pick them out. The piece of gold or silver is said to predict the birth of a male or female child. The whole party along with the married couple move to a neighbouring river or tank, and after bathing return to the bride's house. Neatly dressed and adorned in their best, the bride and the bridegroom, along with the castemen, go in procession to the temple to worship the deity and return home. After another feast, and a donation from those assembled there, the marriage ceremony is brought to a close. Polygamy is in vogue among

them, but polyandry is unknown. Widow-remarriage is freely allowed.

A girl who comes of age is lodged separately in a room, and she is under pollution for fifteen days, and on the sixteenth, she bathes to purify herself, when the castemen who are invited are treated to a feast.

The Otans follow inheritance in the male line. They have the rudiments of a caste assembly, whose duties are similar to those prevailing in other castes. The caste headman is called a Chettiyar, whose permission has to be obtained for marriage by the contracting parties with a present of fifty *puthans* (Rs. 2—9—8).

A woman, who is in confinement, has to observe pollution for ten days; but many enter the kitchen and mingle with the rest of the family only after fifty-six days, though the rest of the family are free from it after ten days.

The Otans profess to be Sivites, but adore Ganapathi.

Religion.

They are animists, and worship the spirits of the departed, to whom offerings are made on the nights of the first of Karkatakam (July-August), and Thulam (October-November).

The dead bodies of the Otans are generally buried. The

Funeral Customs.

son is the chief mourner, and the pollution lasts for ten days. On the morning of the eleventh, the agnates bathe early, and are purified by the *Chettian*, who sprinkles sanctified water over them. The chief mourner makes offerings of cooked rice to the departed spirit, and entertains the Andis to a feast, and on the twelfth day the castemen are entertained.

The Otans follow the traditional occupation of pottery.

Occupation.

A few are wood cutters, while a few others do agricultural work and earn three to four annas a day.

The males wear a small loin cloth like the low caste Sudras.

Dress

Their women wear a piece of cloth five yards long folded twice and a small cloth to cover their breasts. They also wear a number of brass bangles on each arm, while their ears are much dilated to wear the palmyra leaf rings. They are a poor and backward community.

They numbered at the last Census 3,231, 1,663 being males, and 1,568 females.

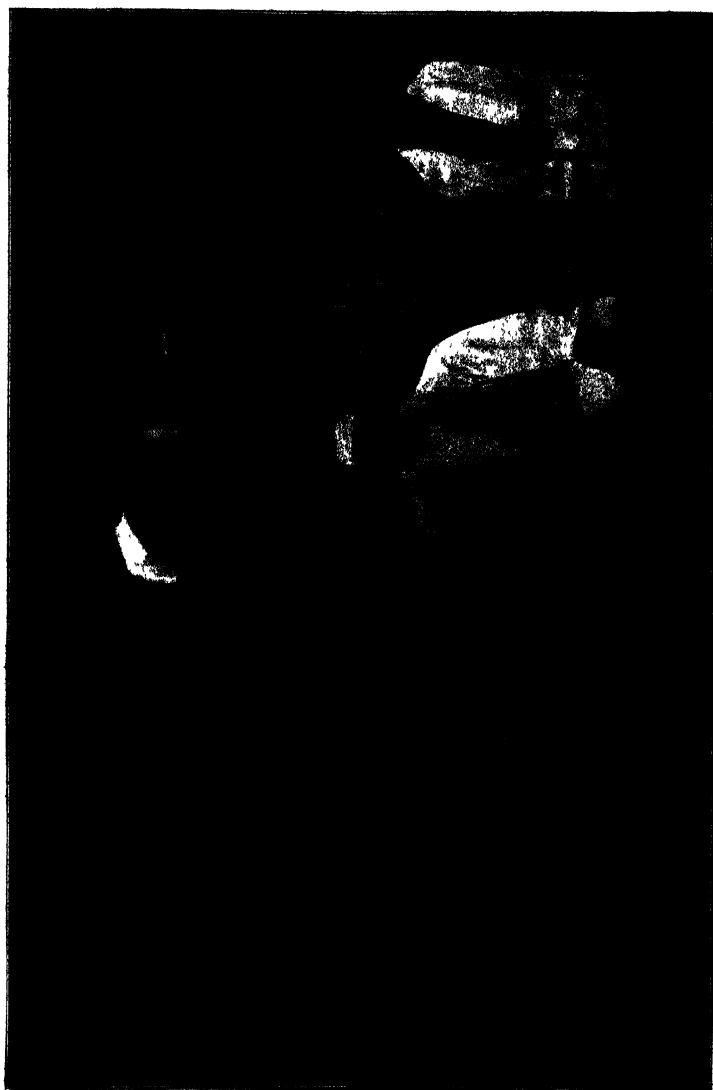
PANDARAM.

The Pandarams are, strictly speaking, the Tamil beggars who take the highest position among beggars, as they frequently follow semi-religious callings in addition to their regular profession of begging. They appear to be a class composed of recruits from various Sudra castes (Vellala and Pillai). In the Tamil districts, the Pandaram caste is composed of respectable people who have settled down as land holders, and *Sanyasis* (ascetics) and priests of certain Matams (religious institutions) and managers of richly endowed temples, such as those at Tiruvádudurai in Tanjore and Mailam in South Arcót. The Pandarams are said to have been originally *Sozhia Vellalas*.

In the Chittur and Trichur Taluks of the State, they are, with a few exceptions, poor, and there are among them several sub-divisions based chiefly on the occupations they follow. They are—(1) Poo Pandaram, who make garlands in temples; (2) Kal-Pandaram, who are either *lingadhari*s (Lingayets) or polish precious stones; (3) Mendicant Pandarams, who are recruited from various classes and wear the *lingam*. The members of all the sub-divisions speak Telugu. There is also a Tamil-speaking class in Trichur.

Girls of the Pandarams are married both before and after puberty. When a girl is selected, the parents of the bride and the bridegroom together with their relatives meet together in the house of the former to make the necessary arrangements for the celebration of the wedding. A piece of cloth (*putava*) is presented to the bride on the occasion. The guests assembled are treated to a feast, and the bridegroom also attends it, and pays the bride's price, which in former days was Rs. 17½. On the next or some other auspicious day, after an elaborate ceremonial by fire of the castemen, the bride and bridegroom wear the *lingam*, which then entitles them to wed. Among the castemen at Trichur this ceremony is performed just before the tali-tying. A day or two previous to this, a marriage booth is erected at an auspicious hour. A bamboo post decorated with mango and other leaves and flowers is also planted an hour or two before the time fixed for the wedding. A pot filled with water and a similar one containing rice and dhol, as well as eleven small ones with various seeds, are placed in a conspicuous part in the pandal or inside the house. A kind

Marriage Customs.



A GROUP OF PANDARAMS POLISHING PRECIOUS STONES

of ancestor-worship also takes place in the house of the bride and the bridegroom. On the morning of the day fixed for the wedding, the bridegroom along with his party halts at a house near that of the bride, whence he is invited to the marriage booth, where he gets his face shaved and then bathes. Dressing himself like a Brahman bridegroom, he and his party go to worship Ganapathy with offerings in the temple dedicated to him. After their return home the various formalities relating to the wedding ceremony are gone through, and these are similar to those among the Tamil Sudras. The guests are then treated to a feast. There is nothing of importance on the second and third days; but on the morning of the fourth day, the married couple bathe, worship the local deity, and return home, and, after a procession in the evening they are served with some sweets which forms the binding portion of the ceremony. This is brought to a close by each of the guests contributing eight annas or a rupee to meet the wedding expenses. On the fifth or sixth day the bride accompanies the bridegroom to his house. Polygamy is in vogue among them, but polyandry is unknown. There is no prohibition against widow-remarriage. Inheritance is through the male line.

They are Sivites and worship Siva-lingam also. Ganapathi and Parásakti are also venerated. Ancestor-worship is performed mostly on the days of *Sankramam* in Karkitakam, Thulam and Makaram. The Pandarams are initiated into the Sivite religion by a rite called *Dikshai*, which is divided into five stages, *Samaya*, *Nirvana*, *Visesha*, *Kalasothana* and *Acharya-Abhishekam*. Some are temple servants and supply flowers for the Gods, while others sing hymns (*Deváram*) during the temple service. Opinion is divided as to whether they are real Lingayats. Pandarams wear the linga in one of the usual modes, and are priests to others who are of the Lingayat faith, and are fed by them on funeral and other ceremonial occasions. These are mostly of the begging section. The celibates wear orange tawny cloths, and daub sacred ashes all over their bodies, wear sandals with iron spikes, carry in their hands an iron-*trisulam* and *dandá-yudha* (emblems of Siva) and allow their hair to become matted. When they go about the streets, they sing popular Tamil songs and beat against their begging bowl an iron chain tied to it.

Married men also beg, but only use a bell-metal gong and a wooden mallet. Most of these help pilgrims to the more famous Siva temples in the Madras Presidency—Palni, Tirutani, or Tiruvannamalai.

The dead are buried in a sitting posture as among other
Funeral Customs. Lingayats. The chief mourner, the son, bathes in the early morning, keeps a pot of water and a lamp near the place of burial, erects a *Samádhi* with a lingam over the spot and four bulls at each corner, to which pujas and offerings of bread, boiled rice, and plantain fruits are made, and these are eaten by the four castemen, *Basavans*, who carried the corpse to the burial ground, and they purify the shoulders with a mixture of milk and water. The pollution lasts for fifteen days, and on the morning of the sixteenth the members of the family and other agnates are purified by a bath, and entertain the castemen in the evening or the night of the same day. A puja is performed by the caste priest before a lighted lamp and four vessels of water either in the house or by the side of a tank or river, and with this water, the priest goes to the temple, washes the *Basavan*, and makes offerings to him. The holy water and the offerings are then partaken of by the members of the family. This is called *Moksha-deepam* (light of salvation), by the aid of which the departed spirit enters Kailas (abode of Siva). On the anniversary day of the death every year, a kind of memorial service is performed for the spirit of the departed by inviting a few of their castemen, washing their feet, and pouring the water thus collected over the *Samádhi*. Siva-lingam is also worshipped. The castemen are then treated to a feast.

As had been said above, one section of the Pandárams polishes precious stones, some again weave
Occupation. mats, a few are cultivators, and a large number of them are beggars. In the Trichur town and its neighbourhood where there is a large number of them, they make *pappadam* (a kind of thin circular bread made of kidney beans) and have begun to adopt the customs of the Sudras among whom they live.

VEZHAMBAN.

The Vezhambans, who form a small and poor community in the vicinity of the Chittur town, had been originally a Tamil

caste of Kásukára-Chettis, who, afraid of the prosecutions of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan, fled from their native country and settled in the Chittur Taluk. It is said that they were clever in magic and sorcery, and were, on that account, called Vezhambans. They are now a purely Malayali caste, and have adopted the customs and manners of the Nayars and follow inheritance in the female line, and in point of social status profess to be above the Izhuvans, whose touch pollutes them. Some are cultivators, while others do cooly work.

CHAPTER XV.

THE JEWS.

In the midst of the Native or Hindu population of the Cochin State is found a small, but interesting colony of Jews, consisting of a small number of families scattered about in a few localities. In the last Census, they numbered but 1,137 and formed one-thirteenth of the Jewish population in British India, or one-sixteenth of that in British India including the Feudatory States

Introduction.

With regard to their advent into the Cochin State there are no authentic accounts, and whatever records they may have possessed were either lost when their original settlement of Cranganore was captured by the Portuguese in 1565 or when the same people plundered their synagogue in Cochin, and the number of those that may have been saved through these periods were further reduced during their struggle with the Dutch at a later period. Hence in the absence of any genuine historical records, writers are obliged to depend upon oral traditions and other sources of information claiming to be historical, but conflicting with one another. One of these is the record of the contact of the Jews with the Dravidians as mentioned in the Bible¹. Solomon's fleet manned by Phœnician sailors appear to have obtained from the Malabar Coast 'ivory, apes, peacocks' as well as silver and gold to adorn his magnificent court. From this it would seem that the King's sailors visited the West Coast of Southern India, and it is not improbable that the Jews also might have made similar visits to these parts as traders.

Early immigration and settlement of the Jew on the Malabar Coast.

Another source of information is a document in the hands of the Cochin Jews. It is a narrative, written in Hebrew, of the events about their first arrival in India and said to have been handed down to them from their forefathers.

1. Kings XX, 22, and 2. Chronicles IX, 22.



THREE WHITE JEWS.

The Rev. Claudius Buchanan, who was much interested in these people and their manuscript records, studied them at first hand in 1807, and published his account of them in his *Christian Researches*. We are indebted to him for the following account. After the destruction of the second temple of Jerusalem, a colony of Jews consisting of men, women, priests and Levites, dreading the conqueror's wrath, left their own country, came to the Malabar Coast and settled in a place called Cranganore with the permission of the king then ruling over that territory. "He allowed them patriarchal jurisdiction within the district with certain privileges of nobility, and the Royal grant was engraved, according to the custom of those days, on a plate of copper".¹ This took place in the year 490 A. D., and the copper plate is still in their possession. The descendants of these colonists lived in peace for about a thousand years, and the number of headmen who governed them was 72. Soon after their settlement other Jews came from Judea, and among them was a man of great wisdom Rabbi Samuel, a Levite of Jerusalem with his son Rabbi Jahuda Levita. They brought with them the silver trumpets, made use of at the time of the Jubilee, which were saved at the destruction of the second temple, and on these were inscribed the ineffable name. Other tribes of Jews who had heard of their prosperity joined them, from time to time, from Spain and other places. There were also among them Bene Israel or children of Israel, who came from Ashakanaz, from Egypt, from Tsoba and other places, besides those who had already settled down here.

In this account there are three periods of time to be noted—1. The advent of the Jews into Cochin after the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 A. D., 2. The grant of the charter after the date of their advent by a long interval of time. 3. The settlement of their forefathers at Cranganore for about a thousand years. "These data", says Dr. Milne Rae, "seem to be mutually inconsistent and cannot be accepted as true".²

Yet another source of information is the *Sasanam* or the copper plate charter now in their possession. It consists of two copper plates with the inscriptions on three sides, and the

1. *Christian Researches*.

2. *The Syrian Church in India*, by Dr. George Milne Rae, p. 139.

character in which it is written is the *Vettezhuthu* "which is believed to be an adaptation of some foreign (probably Scmitic) character to a Dravidian language". The charter has been translated by several scholars, and no two translations agree in their entirety, and hence possess merely an academic interest.

These translations with the remarks on them will be found in the account of these people in the second Volume of "*The Tribes and Castes of Southern India*, page 463-73," but the privileges contained in the charter and enjoyed by them are herein given. The principality of Anjuvannam and all its revenues were conferred on Joseph Rabban, the headman of the Jewish community, and to his prosperity, sons and daughters. They are allowed to fire salutes on all solemnities, ride on elephants and horses, hold stately processions, make use of cries of honour and of torches in the daytime, different musical instruments, besides a big drum, to walk upon roads spread with white linen on grand occasions, hold tournaments with sticks and sit under a stately curtain, and to wear five coloured cloths and long dresses. These privileges are not enjoyed by the White Jews.

Mr. Logan in his *Manual of Malabar* writes that the Jews have traditions which carry back their arrival on the coast to the time of their escape from servitude under Cyrus in the sixth century B. C., and the same fact is referred to in the *History of India* by Sir William Hunter. This eminent historian in his *Indian Empire*, speaks of the Jews settling in Malabar long before the second century A. D. A Roman merchantship, that sailed regularly from Myos Harmaz on the Red Sea to Arabia, Ceylon and Malabar, is reported to have found a colony in the second century A. D. In regard to the Jewish settlement in Malabar, Mr. White observes that the Jews themselves say that Mar. Thomas, the Apostle, arrived in India, in 52 A. D. In view of the commercial intercourse between the Jews and the people on the Malabar Coast long before the Christian Era, it seems probable that Christianity followed in the wake of Judaism. The above facts justify the conclusion that the Jews might have settled in Malabar as early as the first century A. D. Having determined within

certain probabilities the date of their advent to Malabar, Dr. Milne Rae, relying on the sack of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the attack and their dispersal into Arabia by Pompey before and Titus after the Christian era, and similar persecutions in Persia and Arabia, concludes that they must have been immigrants from one of the two latter countries.¹

Then as regards the date of the grant, authorities again indulge in conjectures without advancing any satisfactory evidence in support of them. After laborious researches, Dr. Burnell fixed the date to 700 A. D. Accepting this date, Dr. Milne Rae argues that the Jews must have received the grant a few generations after the settlement, which might have been about the sixth century A. D. In one of the translations of the charter obtained by the Dutch Governor Moens, there is a reference to the year 379 A. D., but this date does not appear in the translations of Gundert, Ellis, Burnell and Oppert. Mr. C. M. Whish fixes 231 A. D. as the probable date of the grant, and it has been already pointed out that they are supposed to have come in contact with the Dravidian people as early as the time of Solomon about 1000 B. C.

The history of the Jews from the date of their settlement in Cranganore to the date of their receiving the charter is almost a blank. In their adopted country they enjoyed toleration which was denied to them elsewhere. They soon became prosperous, obtained social distinction and were favoured by circumstances that resulted in the granting of their charter, which secured for them higher privileges and importance. "The Jews", says Dr. Milne Rae, "did not obtain their privileges for nothing. It is probable that they gave a substantial *quid pro quo*. For the Jewish charter was granted at the time when the western Chalukyan raids resulted in the dismemberment of the Pallava kingdom and its confederate dynasty of which Kerala was one. Very likely the Royal Treasury needed replenishing, and the rank of the army, reinforcements. The Jews probably provided the sinews of war. The Perumal's necessity was then the Jews' opportunity, and they made their bargain accordingly".² After this event

¹ and ². The Syrian Church in India by Dr. George Milne Rae, p. 143-44, 146.

to about the middle of the fifteenth century, they were probably prosperous.

Dissensions arose among themselves, and probably there had been a great dispute between the White and the Black Jews. The latter claimed equal privileges with the former, and demanded the right of intermarriage with them. The former refused to listen to any proposals of this nature. A war ensued, in which the White Jews were nearly exterminated; but with the help of the local chief, the rebels were reduced to obedience. Since then the two races became independent communities.¹

In the sixteenth century the Jews fell victims by turn to the oppression of the fanatical Moors and the bigotted Christians. In the year 1524, the Muhammadans attacked the Jews and the Christians of Cranganore, the reason alleged being that the followers of the Prophet had resorted to various tricks for adulterating the pepper and other wares brought to market, and that some of these people were engaged in the discovery of the tricks for the punishment of the offenders. A large number of the Jews were killed, and the rest were driven out of the town; but the Christians were saved by the Nayars, who retaliated, and in turn expelled the Muhammadans from Cranganore. The Jews were thus considerably diminished in numbers, and underwent many vicissitudes, and since then they never enjoyed the same power. The destruction of Cranganore, the Jews describe as the desolation of Jerusalem in miniature. They were first received into the country with some favour and consideration agreeably to the tenor of the general prophesy concerning the Jews, for, no country was to reject them; but after they had obtained wealth and attracted the notice of men, they were driven to the lowest abyss of human sufferings and reproach.²

After the destruction of Cranganore many of the Jews fled to Chennamangalam, where a small colony of them still exists.

There were no Jews in Cochin at the time of the arrival of the Portuguese in 1,500 A.D., but there were some in Cranganore in a miserable state of destitution, and these were probably the remnant of the old community that had either returned or escaped from servitude. They were finally compelled to desert

¹ and ². *Land of the Perumals*, p. 345, 347-50.

their original settlement by the Portuguese, who enlarged and strengthened the fort of Cranganore. About 1565, they seem to have obtained refuge in Cochin where they built the Jew Town under the walls of the Fort. This town was again pillaged and set fire to, by the Portuguese, when the inhabitants fled to the highlands and returned only after it was taken by the Dutch. After this time prosperity again dawned upon them.

In 1685 an immigration of White Jews took place from Amsterdam, and subsequently from Palestine, Persia, Bagdad, Egypt, England, Poland, Germany, especially from Frankfort, and Spain, and out of the first batch, four merchants, namely, Moses Feriera de Silva, Isaac Irgus, Isaac Moorkat, Abraham Vost of Sepharadim arrived at Cochin from Amsterdam. The Spanish and Portuguese Jews are called Sepharadim to distinguish from the Azhkanazim, the German and Polish Jews. They visited the Cochin Jews and agreed to live with them. They wrote to Amsterdam about what they saw and heard of the Jews of Malabar, and desired to let them have all the books they required. The congregation of Amsterdam sent the books of Moses, of the Prophets, of the Laws and other books, which proved a great blessing to the Cochin congregation. Henceforth they formed a mutual alliance and frequently corresponded with each other, receiving all such books as they wanted, and at the same time, sending back all that was desired of them. Thus the customs of the Cochin Jews became those of Sepharadim (Spanish Jews).¹

The Jews of Cochin are strictly divisible into the White or Jerusalem Jews, and the Black Jews, and an intermediate class, Myukhasim or Brown Jews. The White and the Brown Jews are believed to have their blood unmixed, but at present, the latter as well as the Black Jews are merged physically into one community known as Black Jews. The so called Black Jews are considered to be the descendants of the five hundred slaves said to have been purchased by the first Jewish settlers and of other natives of Malabar who became converts to the Jewish faith; but this statement is not supported by any authority. The Black Jews are not connected with the White Jews by inter-marriage, nor have they any of the Cochin or Levite families

Subdivision among the Jews.

among them. They have none of the Levitical ceremonies in their Synagogues. They form a separate community in Cochin. Still they have the Mosaical Laws (Torah), and their customs and usages are similar to those of the White Jews with a few exceptions and differences in their prayers and songs. They were a large community at one time, but owing to intestine feuds with their White brethren which led to the war already referred to, they were nearly exterminated. There were also emigrations since the downfall of the Dutch, who treated them well, and their number became very much reduced.

The Jews are now found in that part of Cochin called the Jew Town, at Ernakulam the eastern side of the Cochin backwater, at Chennamangalam, at Mala, and at Parur, the last being in Travancore territory. The Jew Town is a part of Mattancheri and consists of a narrow street with "quaint houses of solid build on each side", many of which are of Dutch origin and style. In this street, live side by side the families of the White and Black Jews. Most of the houses have thick laterite walls, with large windows provided with seats and double shutters of glass and wood, and have upper storeys with tiled roofs. In the houses of the rich the members occupy the second storey, which is partitioned into a hall and a number of rooms, one of which is used as the dining room, while the others are drawing rooms and dormitories. These rooms are neatly furnished with chairs, tables, sofas, and other articles of furniture, while the walls are decorated with fine pictures and photographs of the members of the family. The floor rooms are their store rooms, and kitchens of not too clean an aspect. Their houses have no compounds nor gardens. In the door posts of every room, the Jews, according to the Mosaic Law, insert small tubes of tin or bamboo, in which they place portions of Deuteronomy, and the name of Jehovah is written upon very thin leather or vellum. When they leave their houses or simply go from room to room, they kiss the tube or, touching it with their fingers, kiss them. The Black Jews in Ernakulam, Mala, and Chennamangalam are generally poor, and their houses are therefore very small. On the verandah in front, they have their shops, and the rooms inside are occupied for domestic purposes; thus the Jews live near a backwater or canal for



JEW TOWN AT MATTANCHERRY.

the convenience of their trade. The Jews originally preferred to live in a separate part of the town, where they could follow their precepts in their own way, and be beside the synagogue to pray three times a day. Abraham might well say that their residence was more a privilege than a disability.

Among the sons of Israel cousins of all degrees, both on the father's and the mother's side, intermarry. **Marriage prohibitions.** Prohibitions of marriage between kindred are based upon the fear of complicate relationship, concentration of affection within too narrow a circle, inducement to keep the property in the family, violation of God's law as they outrage natural modesty, incest and the injurious results to the offspring.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that the result of the many frequent consanguinous marriages among the Jews of Europe and elsewhere has been an extraordinarily large number of physical and mental defectives among them. Thus most writers on the pathology of the Jews say that the excessive proportion of deaf, mute, blind, insane, idiotic, imbecile and diabetic persons among them, is the result of breeding in-and-in, which has been going on for centuries among the Jews of Europe".¹

All statistical evidence in England, France, Prussia, Hungary and Russia, shows that the frequency of marriage of near kin among them is rather very great. Anthropologists are in doubt whether this in-breeding is the sole cause of the maladies already enumerated among the Jews. There is, at present a consensus of opinion that consanguinous marriages, contracted among individuals, are not at all detrimental to the offspring. If the parents are perfectly healthy and exempt from all commencing degeneracy, they can give birth to children at least as healthy as themselves; but if the degeneracy has already tainted both the parents, the offspring will show it in a greater degree, and will tend towards its entire disappearance. But when such marriages are contracted by defectives, the physical or mental defects are likely to appear in a more accentuated form in the progeny.²

Among the Jews celibacy is unknown, and they have a proverb that he who does not marry is no man. **Marriage Customs.** Marriage is, as among the Brahmans,

1 and 2. The Jews, page 250-251, Contemporary Science series.

looked upon as a religious duty ; and according to the Talmud, the authorities can compel a man to enter into wedlock with a woman of the race. He who lives single at the age of twenty is cursed by God almost as if he were a murderer. Among them childlessness is considered a horrible calamity. The desire for offspring, particularly sons, had its root in the religious belief, and is an outcome of the idea, that the spirit of the dead would be made happy by homage received at the hands of the male descendants.¹

Among the Jews, girls are married both before and after they come of age. The three essential ceremonies in connection with their marriage are the engagement, betrothal, and the actual wedding; the betrothal being not merely a promise to wed, but the actual first step in the ceremony and therefore irrevocable. When a young man has to be married, his parents and others of his family select for him a suitable girl, and the matter is talked over with her parents. In the event of their approval, the elders meet in the house of the bridegroom on an appointed day, and all arrangements leading to the wedding and the dowry to be given to the bride, as also the sum of money to be paid to the Synagogue, are determined. The White Jews do not pay anything to the Synagogue at present. The elders assembled there are served with liquor and *pán-supári*, and are sometimes treated to a feast, after which they depart.

After two days, the bridegroom's party, males and females, assemble in the house of the bride-elect, when a metal dish with a tumbler containing grape juice, a gold or silver ring or a rupee, and with a piece of handkerchief covering the dish, is placed in a conspicuous place. The bridegroom, with his two best men gaily dressed, comes in procession to the house, and there they are well received. He stands facing the bride and puts the ring on her first finger or gives the rupee with the recital of the following Hebrew texts, the significance of which is:—"Behold thou art sanctified unto me by this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israel". He then drops a little grape juice into her mouth. The bridegroom's party assembled there are treated to a feast. This ceremony is called *Ariyath Mehu Déséñ*. The White Jews perform this ceremony in the Synagogue at the wedding time.

1. Evolution of Marriage, by Letourneau,



A GROUP OF YOUNG WOMEN OF THE WHITE JEWS.

On the same night, the bride is bathed and dressed in white costumes. She then goes to the Synagogue to worship the Law.

The bridegroom and his best men get shaved on the wedding day. After rubbing their heads with the milk of the coconut, or some scented oil, they all bathe. On their return home some coins are waved round the head of the bridegroom, and are given in charity to the poor people. Towards the evening the guests assemble in the house of the bridegroom. After a light meal the bridegroom-elect neatly dressed in silk garments and decked out with flower wreaths, gold necklaces, and rings for the fingers, goes to the Synagogue, where the bride elect, veiled, similarly dressed and adorned in her best, and with a *tali* tied round her neck by her mother or sister, also comes in procession.

The elders and the women are already assembled in the Synagogue. The bridegroom and the bride are given special seats. After the evening service has been conducted by the minister of the Synagogue, some elderly member sings a Hebrew wedding song, when the minister along with the bridegroom goes to the spot where the bride is seated. The minister recites Hebrew texts, and the bridegroom with silver ring and grape juice performs the ceremony with the permission of the minister and the elders, and exclaims:—"Praise be to the Lord for his goodness to us". The guests then plead for His infinite mercy. The bridegroom says, "May joy increase among the children of Israël", and the guests, "May it spread in Jerusalem". The bridegroom—"May the Holy Temple be again built, and may the prophets Elija and Moses come and gladden the hearts of the people of Israël. Blessed art thou, O Lord, King of the universe, who hath sanctified us with thy commandments, who has forbidden fornication and restrained us from the betrothed but hath permitted those who are married to us by means of canopy and wedlock. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hath sanctified Israël by means of canopy and wedlock". "Thou", says the bridegroom, "art married unto me by the cup, and by the silver ring that is in the glass of grape, and by all that is under my authority, in the presence of these witnesses and masters according to the Law of Moses and Israël" "Praised be the Lord, who created the fruit of

the vine and suffered men and women to be joined in wedlock". Looking towards the girl and calling her by name, he says, "Thou hast been betrothed and married to me by this cup, whose grape juice thou shalt drink, by the silver in the cup, and by all that is belonging to me ; I wed thee before these witnesses and the minister." He then drinks half of the grape juice and repeats twice over, "By this thou art being wed to me" and then bending pours the rest of the grape juice into the bride's mouth. Then taking the ring, he holds her right hand, and pushing the ring over the tip of her first finger says, " So thou art married to me by this ring according to the Law of Moses and Israël. After this has been twice repeated, he takes a tumbler with some grape juice in it and a necklace of gold and black beads, puts the necklace round the girl's neck, drinks some grape juice and pours the rest into her mouth, and dashes the glass to pieces on the floor. Here some elderly member or a young man reads the written commandments of *Katúba*. Before reading the last sentence the priest takes the fringes of the four corners of the bridegroom's veil or *siseth*, and says three times "God commands that he who marries shall clothe and feed thee and thy children". The minister asks him thrice if he consents to it, and the bridegroom gives an answer in the affirmative. "Ye shall surely rejoice, ye loving companion, as your Creator caused your forefathers to rejoice in the garden of Eden. Blessed art thou, O Lord, King of the Universe, who causeth the bride and the bridegroom to rejoice. Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who hath created joy and gladness, bridegroom and bride, love and brotherhood, delight and pleasure, peace and friendship. Speedily, O Lord, our God, let there be in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of merriment of the bridegroom and the marriage feast and the music of youth. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who causeth the bridegroom and bride to rejoice and prosper". The priest then repeats three Texts. At the end of the third text the guests clap their hands, and the musicians, catching the sound, beat the drum. When the music is over, the bridegroom is seated on the right side of the bride on another chair, and *Weri Mayim Syhar* (sugar-water) is

handed to all present ¹. The minister, then putting his right hand on their heads, blesses the married couple and directs the bridegroom to support the wife and children that may be begotten on her. All these the bridegroom promises to fulfill. Then the guests invoke a blessing and the bridegroom signs a paper in the presence of two witnesses and the minister. The minister reads the last sentence of the marriage covenant, sings it, and, rolling it up, gives it to the bridegroom, who delivers it to the girl, saying, "Take this marriage covenant and henceforth all that belongs to me is thine". She takes it in open hands and makes it over to her father. The guests then sing a song in praise of God, with whose will the ceremony is performed, and in praise of the bride and bridegroom. The minister takes a glass of wine and recites the seven following blessings:—"Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who created the fruit of the vine; blessed art thou, O Lord, our King of the universe, who created everything for thy glory. Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, who hath created man in the likeness of thy form, and prepared for him for a like form of everlasting fabric. Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, who hath formed man, who shall rejoice and delight at the gathering of his children unto him with joy. Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, who causeth him to rejoice with children".

The bride and the bridegroom along with the whole community return to her house, where they are properly welcomed and treated to a feast. The bridegroom and his two best men and the bride with her two companions are lodged in a specially decorated room. The marriage festivities last for seven days, when on each night, after the performance of the evening service in the Synagogue, the priest performs a ceremony. During this period the bride and bridegroom take their meals together. The days are spent in songs and other amusements. On the night of the seventh day, they attend the Synagogue, where, after the performance of a ceremony by the priest, a song is sung, and the marriage is then brought to an end.²

If the bride is of age, the nuptials may take place on any auspicious night during the wedding days, as arranged by the parents on both sides. The elders of the community are

1. This is not in vogue among the White Jews of Cochín.

2. This prevails only among the Black Jews of Cochín.

invited to attend and are treated to a feast. They then determine whether the bride has been a virgin pure and chaste, as otherwise difficulties may arise and she may be divorced.

When a girl comes of age, she is kept in seclusion for seven days from the disappearance of the menses. On the morning and evening of the seventh day she bathes and becomes free from uncleanness. The girl is dressed in rich clothes, and if she is married, the nuptials invariably take place on the night of that day. The monthly courses of the woman bring with them each time the same uncleanness lasting for seven days or more, and during this period everything on which the woman sits or lies down and everyone who touches her belonging is unclean.

When a woman is about to become a mother, no ceremony is performed for her except the wearing of glass bangles in the sixth or seventh month, when women are entertained to a feast. But soon after delivery the mother bathes in warm water if she is not very unwell, and cold water is sprinkled on the baby if it is a male. The navel is cut, the mouth is washed, and the baby is laid on her right side. To ward off evil spirits, a knife is kept under the pillow, and Adam's first wave engraved on a silver plate is hung round the child's neck. The woman in confinement is fed for the first three days with rice *kanji* and chicken broth, and from the fourth day with rice. For the first seven days the woman is made to lie on a cot, and during the same period the baby, after being bathed, has some water waved round its head and thrown at its feet. On the first day the baby is fed with the milk of another woman in the same family or of the same neighbourhood. To keep off evil spirits, ashes are thrown outside the mother's room. On the fourth day invitations are sent to her friends and relations, who, after looking at the baby and the mother, determine whether circumcision should be performed on the eighth day. They are then treated to a chewing of betel leaves and nuts. But now a days, only the circumciser visits the baby to decide whether the ceremony can be performed on that day. The White Jews do not observe this custom.

On the seventh day, when the mother goes to bed, she changes her child from her right side to her left, placing a stone in the place of the child. At dead of night the dread

spirit *Sati* comes to erase from the child's brow what God has written in its favour, and finding a stone goes away disappointed. It must be said, in this connection, that the woman is unclean for seven days after the birth of the child. On the eighth day, the child, if a son, should be circumcised. During this solemnity the mother should be quietly at home, and after this week she has still to remain for 33 days longer in the house without touching anything sacred or going to the sanctuary. If it is a female child, the seven days are extended to fourteen days and thirty-three days to sixty-six days, manifestly in accordance with the ancient belief that a female child causes the mother more labour and longer illness.

On the eighth day, after the first Sabbáth two chairs are placed one for the Prophet Elija, who is
Circumcision. believed to be present at this ceremony, and the other for the operator who may be either the minister or somebody else acquainted with the rite. At 10 or 12 o'clock in the morning, when the guests assemble or when ten are present, the operator goes near the chair intended for the prophet, muttering some Hebrew verses. If the ceremony is to be performed at the Synagogue, the child is carried there in the arm of a woman or in a palanquin, accompanied by the relatives and female guests with music. When the party reaches the Synagogue, the child's maternal uncle takes him and the guests bless it by saying,—*Salám Alékhum*—Hail in God's name. To this the guests answer—*Alákhum Salam*—in God's name peace. The uncle then hands the child over to one of the elders who has taken Elija's chair. While the father sits covered with a veil on one chair, the operator sits on the other and circumcises the child, while the people sing *Halleluja*. Resin and milk are thrice given to quiet the baby, and the wound is healed with brandy and oil. The child is blessed by the minister and called by a name from the Old Testament. The circumciser is sometimes given a small fee, and the relations and friends are treated to a feast. The baby is adorned with silver or gold ornaments. Should the baby die before it is circumcised, the ceremony is performed on the corpse before it is buried.

The custom of circumcision is an extremely ancient one, and was in vogue among all nations which derive their descent from Abraham. The Book of Origins indicates this as prevailing among the Arabian tribes in the narrative of the circumcision of

Ishmael, and Jeremiah designated Edom, Ammon, Moab, and the Egyptians as circumcised. Herodotus, while confirming this, adds that the Ethiopians and Phœnicians and certain Syrian tribes known as Judeans, likewise practised this strange rite, which, outside those regions was nowhere to be found. The Philistines, on the other hand, were always railed at by the people of Israël as the uncircumcised. Thus according to the Old Testament and the writings of Herodotus, circumcision had its origin among an extremely ancient nation that dwelt in the land of the Nile, and in its significance it seems to have been an offering of one's flesh and blood to God. It may have served as a substitute for a sacrifice of flesh and blood at which far more was required. Among the Isralites the custom appears to have been introduced long before the time of Moses, and there is a narrative which deals with the remarkable manner in which Joshua had the nation circumcised on the banks of the Jordan. From his time the custom has been to circumcise the baby on the eighth day of his life, as the first day after the first week from his birth. There was a departure from this old custom, according to which the operation was performed as among the Muhammadans, when a boy first passed out of childhood, and began gradually to enter into his youth. This rite of circumcision acquired great significance (sacrament), and served to mark the entrance of a man into the full rights and duties of the community, and it was only suitable to connect it with the giving of a name. The child received a name on this occasion, which appears to correspond with his new birth as a member of his Jewish community.¹

At present it prevails among nearly all the people of Eastern Africa, in Australia, in many islands of Melanesia and Polynesia and among Mussalmans all over the World. It is performed when a boy attains manhood *i. e.*, at the same age as that at which he is tattooed or painted or begins to dress or adorn himself. In Australia some practise circumcision, while others knock out the front teeth when youths are virile. Some are of opinion that it is done from a hygienic standpoint, that every ancestral custom may, by degrees, take a religious character, and that among the Jews

1. (*Book of Origins* XVII, p 12). (*The Antiquities of Israel* Ewald p 89-97).

the religious character was certainly of a comparatively recent date.¹

Girls are named on the fifth day or any day after one month. On the night fixed, the child is placed on a cot, or held in the mother's hand; and the minister or some elderly member of the community, placing his right hand on the child's head, repeats Hebrew verses in which the name to be given occurs. He retires, and the night is spent by the members of the family in singing and other amusements.

On the 31st day the father with his friends and relations attends the Synagogue, and going to the priest,
Rite of redemption. says, "I present you this my first born son" and then delivers him into his hand. The priest looks at the child, asks for three rupees, and then hands him back to his father with blessings. The ceremony takes place in the house in the case of the White Jews.

Formerly, on the morning of the 33rd day, but now on the 56th day, the woman in confinement becomes purified by a bath with the recital of a Hebrew prayer. Three or four months after the mother is purified, both the mother and the child are taken to the house of her husband on an auspicious day.

Any day after three months, a child's ears are bored in three places on the lobe.

When small-pox prevails in their localities, special prayers are recited in the Synagogue for their protection.

Traditions show that polygamy and concubinage were
Polygamy common among the Hebrews of the patriarchal age. As an instance of the kind, it may be mentioned that Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines and that Rehoboam took eighteen wives and three score concubines. According to the Talmudic rights also this was permitted, though the number of legitimate wives was restricted to four. Though polygamy is allowed, monogamy is the rule at present. Polyandry is unknown.

Levirate is the name given to the obligation imposed
The Levirate. by custom or law on the brother of a deceased husband to marry the latter's widow. It is mentioned twice in the Book of Genesis and was rather a moral than a legal obligation which the brother-in-law could

1. History of Human Marriage by Westermarck page 204-206.

not even refuse, but in refusing it he incurred public odium and had to submit to a degrading ceremony. It is now in vogue among these people only in the absence of a son or a daughter to the widows, as otherwise, they are at liberty to marry another after the performance of a ceremony. The levirate is undoubtedly a widespread custom. When women are regarded as property, they are inherited like other possessions. In many cases, the brother or, in default of the brother, the nearest male relation is expressly stated to be entitled to have the widow, and if he does not marry her, he has nevertheless the guardianship over her. This custom is even now in vogue among some of the low Hindu castes.

Adultery and Divorce
A man who was guilty of adultery received a thousand lashes, whilst the woman suffered amputation of the nose or was sometimes stoned to death. This was the old custom. At present, when a case of adultery occurs and is brought to the notice of the community, the elders meet to make the necessary enquiries. If it is proved to be true, the culprits (both the man and the woman), are ostracised, and are thenceforward deprived of the privileges of the community. They can no longer attend the Synagogue, and can have none of the ceremonies in their houses performed by the priests or ministers. (Vide Caste Government).

"The Book of Deuteronomy very accommodating to the husband authorises him to repudiate his wife 'when she finds no favour in his eyes, because he has found some uncleanness in her. He has only to put a letter of divorce in her hand, and may not take her again either if she is repudiated by another husband or becomes a widow;' (Deuteronomy, XXVI, v., 1 and 2). With much stronger reasons a man can repudiate an immodest wife. As for the wife, she could demand a divorce only for very grave causes as the following:—"If the husband is attacked by a contagious malady (Leprosy), if his occupation is too repugnant to her, if he deceives her, if he habitually illtreats her, if he refuses to contribute to her maintenance, if after ten years of marriage, his impotence has been well-established especially if the woman declares that she needs a son to sustain her in her old age."¹ But even then

¹ Evolution of Marriage by Letourneau.

it is the husband that is reputed to have sent away his wife, and she loses her dowry.

Among the Hebrews individual property was instituted in very early times, for it is alluded to in

Inheritance.

Genesis. But the law forbade the property being equally divided among all the sons of the father or in general being cut up. The eldest son legally received a double portion which consisted of not only a share of the ancestral estate, but also a corresponding portion of the moveable wealth. It was done on the assumption that the first born was the principal heir and proper representative of the family, and as such would take on himself more of the duties of the head of the family than the other brothers, such as maintaining the widows and unmarried daughters of the family. Sons of concubines had only gifts to hope for. The same customs are still in vogue. In the absence of sons, daughters inherit their father's property all alike.

The Myukkhasim or the Brown Jews and the Black Jews form a confederation of seven congregations, caste or tribal assemblies, called Yògams, each of which regulates all matters relating to the welfare of the community.

Social Organization.

Among them in each village there are five office bearers—

1. The headman who is the senior member, 2. His assistant, the next senior man (*Segan*), 3. The *Gabai* or the treasurer, 4. *Pattakàran* or the minister, and 5. The *Samàs* or the beadle

Segans or assistants help the headman, and devise plans for bettering the Synagogue. They are chosen by the castemen from the old and respectable members of the community. One of these may be asked to resign in favour of another when necessary. The duty of the *Gabai* is to recover outstandings and to keep an account of the Synagogue fund. The *Pattakàran* or the minister is not a paid man in Cochin. He conducts divine service, blesses those who make offerings of oil or money, celebrates marriages, and performs funeral and other religious ceremonies. Any member of the community who can read Hebrew pretty fluently and lead the holiday service may be appointed minister without any remuneration.

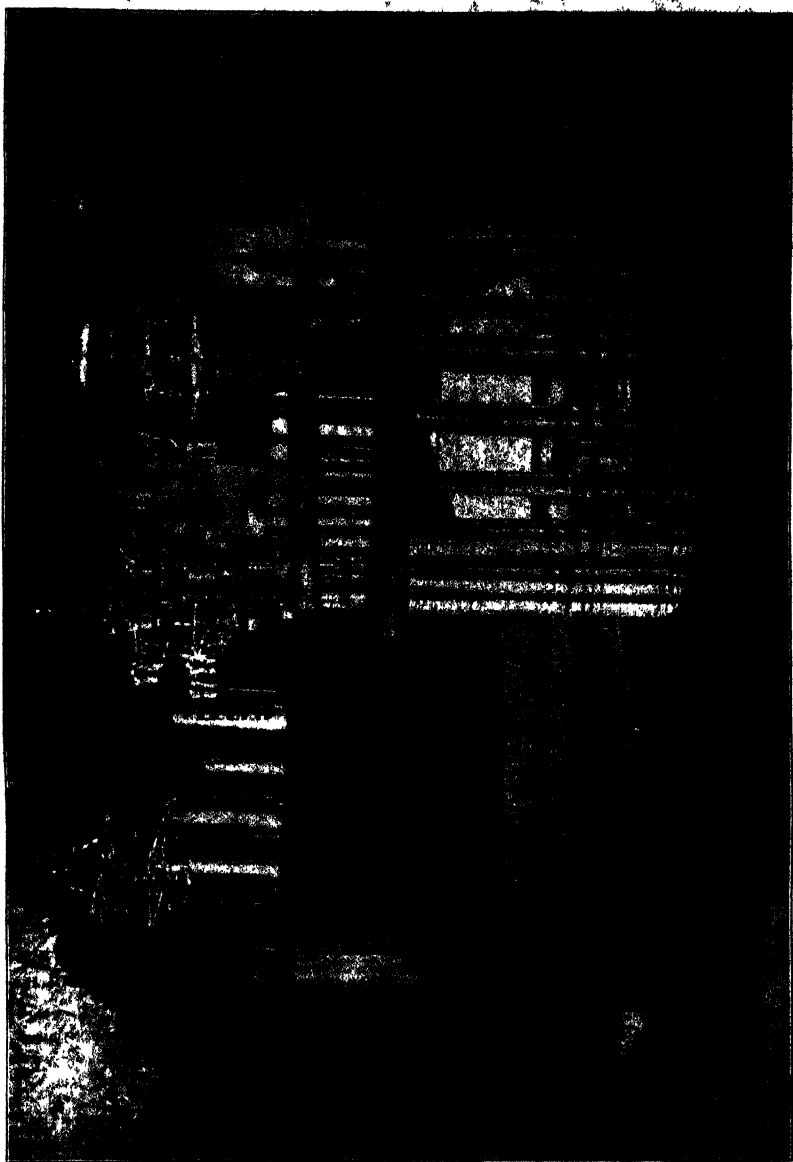
There is a servant of the Synagogue who has to sweep and light it, to prepare the grape juice, to gather the sums

due to the Synagogue and to make them over to the treasurer. He tells people of caste meetings, of births, marriages, deaths, and excommunications and in cases tried before the headman calls out the names of the witnesses. He is paid about Rs. 5 to 8 a month.

In each village caste questions are settled by the headman at a meeting of the senior members of the community. He is helped by a senior member who acts as a judge and the four elders called the *Ségans*. All persons present at such meetings are allowed to take part in the discussion, and if necessary, to record their dissent or petition for a new trial. In taking evidence they caution the witnesses to speak the truth, but do not exact a formal oath. The marriage covenant is in general strictly respected, and adultery is punished with fine. In aggravated cases, the agrieved party is allowed to divorce and to marry another. In the event of a difference of opinion on a particular matter, some members of each Yogam are invited, and their decisions are final. The White Jews also have a similar organization.

The religion of the Jews is called Judaism, and the essence of their faith is summed up in the formula that
 Religion Jehovah is the God of Israel, and Israel is the people of Jehovah. Their religious belief is governed by Biblical and Talmudic laws. Their place of worship is called a Synagogue.

In the Jew Town of Cochin are three Synagogues, one of which is at the northern extremity, close to the palace of His Highness the Raja, and belongs to the White Jews; while the central and the southern ones are used by the Brown Jews and Black Jews respectively. The chief Synagogue or the Synagogue of the White Jews is a pretty fine edifice about 40 ft. long, and 30 ft. wide. In the inside are dry brass chandeliers holding numerous tumblers of oil for lights. The reading desk is in the centre facing the books of the Laws on the west, where they are kept in a cup-board behind a curtain, and consist of copies of the Pentateuch, most beautifully written in Hebrew characters on vellum. The flooring of the Synagogue is of blue and white China tiles. The women's gallery is screened from the body of the Synagogue, around which are benches for the men to sit on. The Jews put off their shoes before they enter the house of prayer. There is an



iron safe for the reception of alms for the poor, fixed against the outer wall of the Synagogue. There are two Synagogues in Ernakulam, one in Chennamangalam and one in Mala.

The Jews rise about 5 o'clock, and after prayer and ablutions proceed to the Synagogue for public devotions. At seven they return home, breakfast, set about the day's business, dine between 12 and 2 o'clock and again assemble for half-an-hour's prayer at 3 P. M., and 5 P. M., and resume their work until 6 P. M., when once again they attend the Synagogue for about half-an-hour. They return home, have their supper between nine and ten and retire to bed. On Friday the evening service begins at half past five and concludes at half past six, when the Talmud or some other religious work is read until bed-time. On Saturday, the morning prayer continues from 7 to 10 o'clock; in the after-noon from three to four o'clock; in the evening from six to half past six as usual, with the termination of which they close the Sabbath. They are very exemplary in their observance of this division of time, and are rigidly correct in their respect for the seventh day.

The service in the Synagogue of the White Jews is conducted by the Rabbi, who with his head covered by a *Talith* or veil thrown over his turban chants a prayer from a reading desk, which, facing to the west, is raised two steps above the floor, and is surrounded by a railing, outside of which are the seats provided for the congregation. The Rabbi generally covers his face whilst reading, but this is not done in the feast of the tabernacle. He turns towards the west, while the congregation, facing the Book of Law, continues swaying their bodies incessantly backwards and forwards and bowing towards the tabernacle, apparently with deep devotion. After a short interval of silence, the latter make a vociferous response, and incline their bodies with much show of respect towards the silver cases containing the Books of Law. The women then descend and solemnly go through the ceremony. The service is then brought to a close. The same observances take place in the Synagogues of the Brown and Black Jews also.

The Jewish *Sabbath* and feasts begin at six in the evening and lasts for the succeeding twenty-four hours, the day being computed as lasting from sunset to sunset. There are occasions of great importance observed in great

part even to the present day by every faithful Jew with scrupulous care. Before their Sabbath begins everything in the form of work for the succeeding day must be completed; food is prepared, even the tables laid, whilst all remaining ready dressed for the Sabbath when they do no manner of work. The fires in every house are extinguished; even smoking is prohibited until the evening; the Sabbath is a day of rejoicing, and prayers are said at stated periods, but the remainder of the day is spent in visiting friends, playing cards, and other games. As a rule every day is commenced by a prayer both at home and in the Synagogue, repeated about three in the evening and at sunset.

This feast which falls at the beginning of October is celebrated with much attention to the ritual. It is then more than at any other time in the year that the women appear in public. Attached to every house there is a cadjan shed, and here in the open air all take their meals. Cups of oil with cotton wicks are kept lighted at the doorway of every house, whilst opposite to the Synagogue there is a large stand filled with oil lights. On the last and most important day of the feast, the congregation assemble in the Synagogue at half past one, and the service begins at two. Persons of both sexes and of every age assemble in the house of prayer which is neatly and tastefully decorated for the occasion. Around the reading desk is a string of white flowers of the Indian jasmine. The five books of the Mosaic Law are seen in their silver cases in their tabernacles, each of which is surmounted by a golden crown; and the two externals differ in having a sort of turret at either extremity. All the lamps inside the Synagogue are alight, and everyone is in his best gala dress. The flowing robes of the Jews in various colours are exceedingly handsome. The women also appear in their finest attire. A little after two o'clock all the male members of the congregation advance towards the Books of Law, and the three central ones are taken down from their position and carried towards the door in the midst of chants and songs of praise. At every step the members of the congregation rush forward to salute them. They are taken outside and carried round the Synagogue. All join in the singing, while those in front and around the book dance and jump about. When the Jews have left the building, the Jewesses come down from the gallery and kiss the two

The feast of the
Tabernacle (Suka).

BLACK JEWS OF COCHIN.



remaining books. Meanwhile the three other books are carried three times round the building. The Synagogue is again entered, and the two remaining ones are taken out to join in the last round. In the Synagogue of the Black Jews, rose water is sprinkled from a silver bottle over the books, but with the White Jews it is done at the doors. In commemoration of the day of the destruction of Jerusalem, they hold a very strict and solemn fast from 3-30 P. M. one day until 7 P. M. on the following. They dress themselves in deep mourning, and weep for the desolation of the present city. The Jews in their Synagogues and the Jewesses on the floor of their houses, all mourn as for some great calamity or as for the loss of some dear object. The great day of atonement of every year is kept very strictly, and the males are dressed in the same white flowing robes that will after death form their shrouds.

Passover is the first and greatest of their festivals, and is also called the first full-moon. It is the commencement of the religious year, and commemorates the birth day of the nation or the day of deliverance from Egypt, when the angel of death passed over their dwellings. The festival lasts for seven days, and every ceremony recalls the awful day of their deliverance. On the first evening they taste the bitter herb emblematic of the bitterness of their bondage. They partake of the food with their loins girded as ready for their flight; they eat only unleavened bread—the bread of slavery prepared in the hurry and confusion of departure. Every Jew must use a supplementary set of crockery and kitchen utensils. This feast occurs early in April.

This feast is celebrated in commemoration of the delivery of the law and the formation of the covenant by which the Jews became the tenants of the luxuriant soil, when the harvest was gathered and its rich abundance stored up. The gladness was to be as general as the blessing.

The new moon of the seventh month is appointed for the feast of the Trumpets. It is, in fact, the beginning of the old Hebrew year, and remained that of the Civil Year. The new moon or the first day of the lunar month is not ordained by positive precept, but recognized as a festival of established usage.

The day of Atonement is observed as a day of feast. On that day the Jews pray in the Synagogue from five in the morning till seven in the evening. Their fast begins at 5 P. M. on the day previous to each feast, and ends at 7 P. M. the next day. It is in commemoration of the scape-goat which was dedicated to the evil spirits and led forth burdened with the sins of the people to be dashed in pieces from a cliff in the dreary desert near Jericho. This is kept very strictly, and the males are dressed in the same white flowing robes that will after death form their shrouds.

The Feast of Purim commemorates the national deliverance through Esther and the Hanoukhah.

The Feast of Lights is in remembrance of the renewal of the temple worship by Judas Maccaboeus.

As there is only one almighty God, so there is only one people, the descendants of Abraham under his special protection. The God of these chosen people is their temporal as well as spiritual sovereign. He is not merely their legislator but also the administrator of their laws. Their land is his gift, held from him as their liege-lord on certain conditions. He is their leader in war, their councillor in peace. Their happiness or adversity, national as well as individual, depends solely on the maintenance or neglect of their divine institutions. Such was the common popular religion of the Jews, as it appears in their law, their history, their poetry, and their moral philosophy.

Judaism is the most exclusive of religions. It is not universal like Christianity, but tribal. It has a great distaste for the stranger at the gate, and does not send forth any missionaries among people of other creeds. It is not eager for proselytes like Christianity or Muhammadanism, and repels most of those who might be attracted by its ethical teachings. Ritual circumcision is not calculated to make Judaism attractive to Christians and others.

When the death of a member of the White or Black community is expected, some of the elders of the Synagogue are sent for, who after arrival receive the confession of the dying man. Directions are also received as to the division of the property, and sometimes as to his own obsequies which take place within three hours after death. All males, friends and relations usually attend as a mark

Funeral Customs.

of respect to the dying man. Those closely related to him entreat him to pardon them for anything which they may have done to offend him during his life-time. As long as he is alive, the minister reads the sacred books to him and lays a copy under his pillow. When at the point of death grape juice is dropped into his mouth, his eyes are closed, and he is comforted with the promise that the children will be properly looked after. When all is over, the widow and the son rend their clothes and throw them against the husband's cot. The body is then covered with a white sheet and around it both men and women weep. A few hours after death, if the dying person is a male, a barber shaves his head, and then he is bathed in cold water. The body is then rubbed with cocoanut milk and twice washed with soap and warm water. Seven pots of water one after another are poured on it and are then dashed on the floor. The body is then removed to another room and rubbed dry. It is newly dressed and covered with a winding sheet. The Surplice or *sisid* is drawn and handkerchief and *Sabja* twig placed on the right hand. Flakes of cotton and wool are placed on the eye-lids with a handkerchief over them, and the face is then covered by the sheet. The toes are tied together with a thread. The men sit on the verandah or at some distance from the bed; and a friend or a neighbour goes to tell the relations of the death. The body is measured, and the man goes with a few labourers to dig the grave. When he comes back, others help him in making grave clothes, a pillow, a cap, and a pair of trousers.

The coffin is brought from the Synagogue and cleaned, and the body is placed in it with prayers. It is then carried to the grave yard, and with prayers is laid in the grave. Those assembled recite Hebrew verses and throw a handful of earth each and turn away. The diggers then fill the grave, and when it is full, the mourners, turning to the west, repeat prayers, and on leaving the graveyard, each plucks a handful of grass with his hand and throws it behind his back. The funeral party go to the deadman's house, sit on the verandah and, after smoking and drinking a draught of liquor, return home. In the evening near relatives bring cooked rice and dine with them. On the spot where the dead breathed his last, a mat is spread, and near by a lamp is placed with a pot of water. The first seven days are kept as days of mourning. The women mourn for seven

days, sit, dine and sleep on the mat during day and night. The members of the family neither go about nor sit on chairs, nor bathe, nor eat anything substantial nor drink liquor. The men wear no turbans and do not salute their friends. Every morning ten religiously minded men read the common and special prayers in the house of the mourner in honour of the dead. The minister reads the sacred texts for the seven days with a few people. On the morning of the seventh day after the usual service, the minister goes to the mourners' house with the men, and the chief mourner proceeds with them to the burial ground. The minister recites certain prayers in honour of the dead, and then the mourners turn their backs on the grave, repeat prayers and return home. At the mourner's house the *Tora* is read. Guests are not invited; all those who hear the *Tora* come unasked and bless the food and repeat prayer. They are treated to a feast.

Then every Saturday for eleven months some prayers for the dead are recited, and on a Wednesday of the eleventh month, a ceremony is performed and the Jews are treated to a feast. In the third and twelfth month also, a feast is given to a large number of their fellow men when both the *Tora* and Hebrew prayers are read. On the anniversary day of death a commemorative rite is performed with a feast to a few members of the community.

The Jews originally had no special turn for trading.

*Occupation.

They were at first herdsmen, tillers of the soil, and handicraftsmen of the simplest sort. But in the countless lands into which they were carried by the dispersion they were often forced to follow quite other paths than the old. The prejudice of the nations among whom they settled forbade to them the ownership of lands and the following of handicrafts. Commerce thus became to them the easiest and the most natural resource. They practised it, and their dexterity increased. The success they achieved was one which their ancestors did not possess. This awakened trading spirit favoured the dispersion, and this in turn stimulated the former, so that the Jews were scattered everywhere, and everywhere they became merchants, a profession in which, it is said, "they were honourably distinguished".¹ The proverb as rich as a Jew illustrates their skillfulness.

1. The Jews (page, 136—137.)

In Cochin they have always been an industrious people, and have no hesitation to enter any profession to gain an honest livelihood. Trade was the occupation in which they played an important part on the West Coast during the days of the Portuguese and the Dutch. They are even now mostly following the same profession. The Black Jews who are comparatively poorer are petty shop-keepers, hawkers, book-binders, dealers in poultry, fish, rice and other commodities. The Bene Israels of Bombay have begun to move with the times by entering into every walk of life. Their brethren in these parts are very far behind. The former are progressing fast in modern education ; many among them are artisans, and contractors, while some occupy posts in the services of Government, railways, municipalities, mercantile companies, etc. The members of the Cochin community are not sufficiently advanced to fill such posts. They are a backward community in point of education , but thrive fairly as merchants, middlemen, money lenders and the like.

The only available test of the education of a people is the proportion of persons who can read and write.

Education

In this respect the Jews are a backward community. Very few of their boys and girls avail themselves of the facilities afforded them in the primary and the secondary schools of the State. Being an isolated and orthodox community, they, like the Jonakan Mappillas, consider it a prime necessity for their children to study Hebrew in order to understand the elements of their religion. The children are therefore taught Hebrew in a building close to the Synagogue. Of late, a small number of their girls are found attending the local primary school, where they learn a little of the vernacular and other subjects taught therein. Some are found reading in the higher classes of the College at Ernakulam.

The Jews have no vernacular of their own. Hebrew is to the Jews as Sanskrit is to the Brahmans. But in fact they speak the language of the people around them. The members of the community can speak Malayalam, but very few can read and write it.

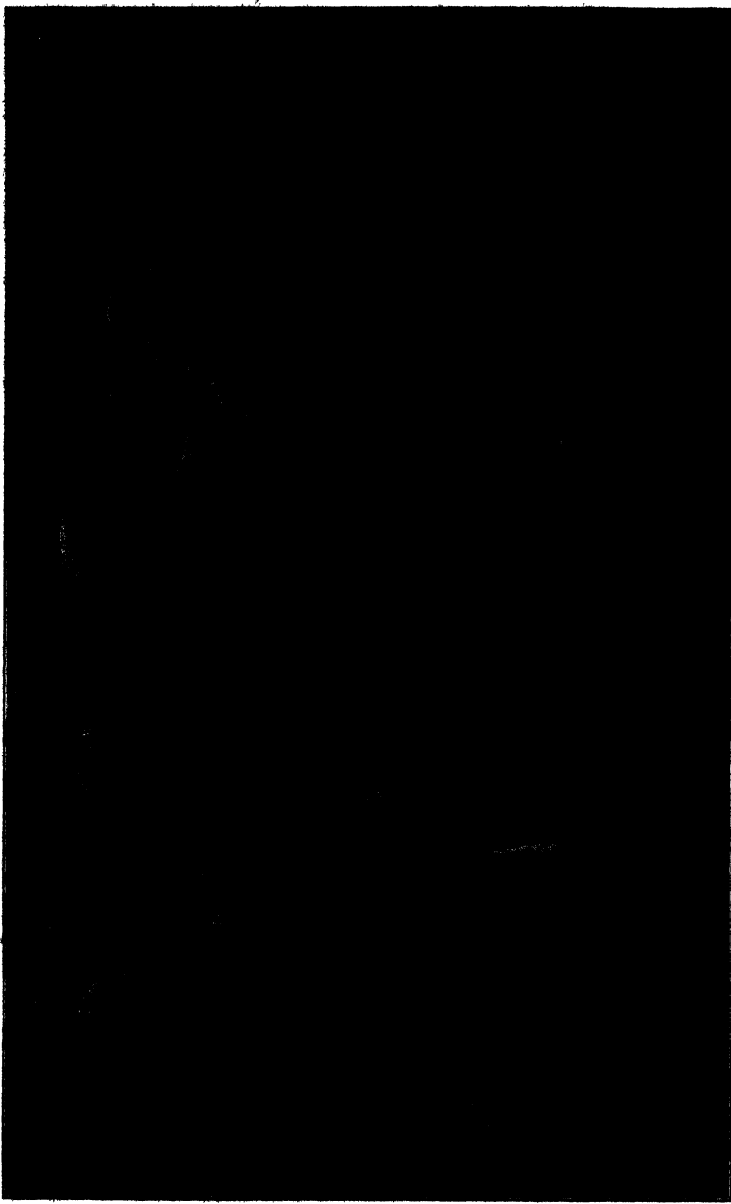
According to the last Census the Jews of Cochin number 1,175, as against 1,137 in 1901. Of these 192 are White Jews and the rest 983 Black. The White Jews are confined to Jew Town,

Population.

while the Black Jews are found there as well as in Ernakulam, Chennamangalam and Mala. During the last half century and more, their numbers have been steadily decreasing. Many young men among them go to foreign places in search of suitable work, and settle themselves there after earning a fortune. Many, I am informed, are now in Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Singapur, Honkong, and other places. Several women marry at a comparatively advanced age for want of suitable husbands.

The ordinary dietary of the Jews is rice and curry, either vegetable or meat. They breakfast between 8 and 9, dine between 12 and 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and their supper is at 8 P. M. They are very strict in the observance of the dietary laws. They subject every carcass to a thorough examination by an expert, who condemns meat that is unfit for their consumption. Special attention is paid to the condition of the viscera, particularly the lungs, pleura, liver and spleen. "Those animals whose lungs present any adhesion to the thoracic walls or between the lobes of the lungs or in which small nodules are discovered scattered over the surface of the lungs, are pronounced unfit for human consumption."¹ It is said that bovine tuberculosis is thus prevented from gaining a foothold among the children of Israel. The dietary laws by no means prevent social intercourse between the Jews and their neighbours of different faith, for, they are not limited to the prohibition of pork and to the prescription of a special method of slaughter, and of meat inspections with a view to prevent diseases.² Some speak as if Moses had been a great sanitary reformer, the ancient precursor of modern teachers of hygiene. It is very probable, however, that these rules had their origin much before the time of Moses, and are in fact the survivals of the system of Totemism which existed among the primitive Hebrews. As members of the Totem clans, they tabooed animals which they worshipped (totems). The list of forbidden animals is given in *Leviticus* XI and *Deuteronomy* XV, and this was afterwards codified with the object of keeping the Jews isolated from the heathen. They cannot eat game, nor some species of fish. These laws are observed by the Jews in the

¹ and ². *The Jews Contemporary Science series* pages 291, 535.



A GROUP OF WOMEN OF THE BLACK JEWS.

State, though there is a tendency for them to be disregarded in other countries.

The Jews wear a long tunic of rich colour, over it a waistcoat buttoned up to the neck and full white trousers, with a skull cap, and sometimes a turban when they go to the Synagogue. While at home, they are often seen with a red coloured loin cloth, a shirt, and a skull cap. Some among the White Jews appear in European costume. The Black Jews wear a similar loin cloth with a shirt and a skull cap like the Jonakan Mappillas. They use wooden sandals. Their heads are shaved at an early age, but leave a lock of hair just in front and above the ears. The males use no ornaments of any kind except a ring or two for the ring finger.

The Jewesses wear a red coloured loin cloth and a jacket to cover their breast. The former is fastened round by a gold or silver belt, from which a bunch of keys is sometimes suspended. Their dress is simple, but, for grand occasions, they have rich costumes. They cover their heads with a veil which falls over their shoulders as low as their waist. They wear various kinds of gold necklaces, some of which are made of venetian sequins. Owing to some dispute between the two communities, Black Jewesses adopted the Bagdad dress, which consisted of a scanty shirt of rich cloth, satin or muslin, made in one piece from the neck to the ankles, gathered in behind, fastened up in front and open from the throat nearly as far down as the waist, showing a white handkerchief or stomacher.

The hair on the head is never parted and smoothened with oil. It is always untidy. Elderly married women do not care much for their personal appearance. Married women after the birth of their second child generally leave off their jewels and wear a plain dress. In mourning they wear a white dress with a black border, and white or black ornaments. After marriage, they always cover their heads with a handkerchief and on grand occasions with a little gold coloured cap. In the Synagogue, the women have their heads covered by a long muslin or net-veil.

It is said that the Jews, in spite of their being only a small fraction of civilized humanity, have succeeded in maintaining the purity of their race for the last 4,000 years. "During the last 18 centuries of dispersion among all the nations of the habitable globe, among

Dress and other ornaments.

Purity of the Race.

nearly all the races of the mankind, they are allowed to have refrained from intermarriages outside of their pale and thus maintain the purity of the breed of Israel to an extent unknown among any other ethnic groups of people"¹. The result is, that the Jews of to-day present a uniform physical type, wherever they may be encountered. Furthermore, it has been repeatedly asserted by anthropologists that the race portraits portrayed on the ancient Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian monuments, which have recently come to light, show faces of Jews which bear a striking resemblance to the faces met with to-day in Warsaw, Frankfort, Whitechapel, London and in the Cochin Town. Notwithstanding all the vicissitudes which they have been subjected to for 4,000 years, it is said that the type of the ancient Hebrew survives to-day in the modern Jews wherever they may be found."

European anthropologists have given the Jews an unusual amount of attention. Measurements have been taken of them in various parts of the world in order to ascertain whether the alleged uniformity of physical type can be proved by scientific tests. Demographers and sociologists have studied them in their respective spheres and measurements, and photographs of the race-types of Jews in many parts of Europe, and in some parts of Asia and Africa are all now available for a close study of their racial characteristics.

According to J. Coleman the most constantly reappearing racial traits are the following:—"The colour of the skin, hair, and eyes, the form of the skull and face, the relative length of the limbs, and within certain limits the height or stature. These traits are constant in a race, and depend only on heredity and are not known to be influenced by external conditions. There are also the secondary or fluctuating racial traits, which depend greatly on the social and physical environments, and these, according to the same author, are the amount of fat on the body, the development of the muscular system, the strength of the skeleton and, to a certain extent, stature. All these are known to increase in well-nourished individuals".²

The investigations of Professor Boas, a distinguished American anthropologist have shown that the crossing of two races has produced neither any new type nor middle types, but

1. *The Jews Contemporary Science series*, pages 21-23.

2. *The Jews Contemporary Science series*, pages 24-25.

only the half breeds which show reversion to one of the parent's types. This theory of the stability and persistence of the racial characters has not been entirely accepted by all anthropologists. Many, on the other hand, insist that social environments have something to do with the change of physical traits, and produce a change in the organism. With the concomitant changes in the somatic traits, the followers of this theory of environment mention the Jews as a good example of a race which has maintained itself in absolute purity of blood, showing physical differences in different countries. The blond Jews of North Europe, the brunettes in the south, the Black Jews of the Malabar Coast, the Negro Jews of Abyssinia and Mongolian Jews of China, are thus supposed to be not a product of race fusion, but solely the result of the climate, altitude, nourishments, etc. This conclusion has been proved to be erroneous. From the measurements of the stature, the headform, the nose and other organs of the Jews in various parts of the world, as also the types of pigmentation, anthropologists have arrived at the conclusion that there are at present among the Jews various types which are the result of race fusion. Thus in countries where the population is predominantly blond, the Jews formed by fusion acquire blond elements, where the bulk of the population is brunette, as in the Caucasus, they do not acquire anything else but brunette traits. On the same principle the Black Jews in India and on the Malabar coast are of undoubtedly Hindu derivation. The Falasha Jews in Abyssinia are also like the Jews of Cochin, among whom there is an infusion of foreign blood, chiefly Negroid. These two classes of Jews afford excellent examples of the fact that the Jews have made proselytes after their dispersion among nations and that they have incorporated into their community foreign elements at various times. Similar cases are also recorded in ancient times in the history of the Jews in the various parts of Europe, *e. g.*, Gaul, Spain, Italy and Hungary. In India, especially in Cochin, the infusion of native blood is so great among the Black Jews that to-day after many generations they cannot be recognised. Viewed therefore from an anthropological standpoint, the question of the uniformity of the Jewish race loses its significance.¹

¹ The Jews Contemporary Science series, page 508

Physical Characters.

It is said that the Jews according to the Bible were a "short race of people", and the medium height of the present Jewish population of Europe, according to Paul Topinard and Deniker, is about 165 cms. From this it may be inferred that the Jews of to-day are still short of stature. From the measurements of the Black Jews recently taken by me it is found that the average height is 164.1 cms. The Jewesses are still shorter in stature than the Jews. This is partly attributed to the influence of environments such sedentary habits, the indoor occupations of many, the wretched social, economic and sanitary conditions they are now subject to, and partly to certain ethnic factors. Their average cephalic index is 77.1 and the average nasal index is 68.6. Various types of nose, straight, aquiline, or hooked, flat and broad, were also met with among them in the course of my investigations. A few instances of erythrism or red hair are met with among some of the White Jews.

The physical type of the White Jews is said to be the same as that of the European Jews. Although they have been living in these parts for several centuries, they appear to have been unaffected by external environments. They are of white complexion and, when contrasted with that of the natives, their whiteness is accentuated and is somewhat of the nature of sickly pallor. "Their women when young are said to have mostly a Spanish face, though in a few cases the pale coloured hair and little brown or blue eyes would indicate the idea of a northern parentage."¹ While the Jew seems to improve in appearance as years roll on, the Jewess fades at 30. "The children look almost leprously white, so do the eyes become habituated to dark skin. This retention of complexion and features for so many centuries is truly astonishing".² It is perhaps partly owing to the absence of any admixture of native blood in their veins and partly owing to fresh arrivals from Europe to renew their blood.

The hair and beard are mostly black, but blond hair, with grey and blue eyes, is also met with among a few of them. The hair is of abundant growth, somewhat curly or wavy. The Jewish cast of face is very noticeable among the White Jews.

1 and 2. Land of the Perumal, pages 346 and 48.

There are, among them, two distinct types, namely, Ashkenazim (German and Polish Jews) and Sepharadim (Spanish Jews).

The Black Jews including the brown section, on the other hand, are of a different type. The colour of their skin is of various shades ranging from fair, to a very small extent, like the White Jews, to brown and dark, like that of the members of other low castes, among whom they live. They have, however, the Jewish physiognomy which would incline one to believe that they are of a mixed Jewish blood.

The colour of the Jews of Cochin is a subject which has engaged the attention of a large number of writers. Benjamin Tudela in 1167 speaks of there having been only about "100 Jews who are of black colour". Manasseh, Bene Israel, in 1565, while addressing Cromwell, speaks of them as tawny. The earliest exponent of a threefold division based on the white, brown and the black colours of the Jews was the Rev. T. Whitehouse in an article in the *Evening hours* for 1873, and this classification recognizes the existence of the Myukkhasim or 'those of lineage' as a distinguished community. Following the interpretation of this threefold division, Dr. Burnell, Dr. Day, Professor Milne Rae and others state that the Myukkhasim or the Brown Jews are the offspring of the White Jews and those of converts from the low-caste natives. The Brown Jews resent this view and consider themselves to be the descendants of the ancient Jews, and treat the Black Jews as socially inferior to them because of their descent from the old converts or slaves. At the same time, they regard the White Jews as late comers. Nevertheless the two sections, the brown and the black, are now physically merged into one community, the members of which are of all shades of complexion.

With regard to the question of priority of settlement, anti-quarians are again divided in their views. According to Dr. Buchanan, the White Jews of Cochin are later settlers than the Black Jews. They had only the Bible written on parchment and of modern appearance in their Synagogue, and he managed to get from the Black Jews much older manuscripts written on parchments, goat's skin and cotton paper. Regarding the Black Jews, he says, "It is only necessary to look to their countenance to be satisfied that their ancestors must have arrived in India many ages before the White Jews. Their Hindu complexion and their very imperfect resemblance

to the European Jews indicate that they have been detached from the parent stock in Judea many ages before the Jews in the West, and that there have been marriages not Israelitish." Professor Wilson of Bombay adds that the family names, such as David Castle (David the Castilian), go to prove that some among them are the descendants of the Jews of Spain, probably of those driven from that country during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. Other surnames such as Hallegua, Ashkanazy, Zackai, Rabbi, Kodar, Kohen, Sargon, Asshoori, and Bagdadi refer to the countries of Europe and Asia from which their ancestors came at various times, mostly owing to the fear of persecutions at home. The real ancient Jews, adds the same Professor, are the Black Jews, the descendants probably of Judea Arabians and Indian Proselytes.

The writer of the article on Cochin in the *Encyclopaedia Britanica* says that of the two classes the fair or White Jews are of a recent settlement, while the Black Jews, who have been supposed by some to be Hindu converts, are probably an earlier race of Jews from Palestine.

In regard to the claim of the Black Jews as being the only genuine Jews, a competent Jew David de beth Hillel, who visited Cochin in 1832, opined that they are probably the descendants of the Israelites who came to India but did not return to the land of their birth and that they did not deserve to be called Black Jews, because they were not so dark coloured as they were represented to be.

The above remarks recall another tradition current among the Black Jews that they are the descendants of the Jews who were driven out of the land of Israel 13 years before the destruction of the first temple built by Solomon, and that they came first either to Calicut or Palur near Chavakkad, whence they emigrated to Cranganore.

In this connection, it may not be out of place to refer to some of the arguments put forward by the Myukkasim among the Black Jews in support of the claims for priority, and they are—1. The probability of the granting of the copper-plate charter to one Joseph Rabban, who, according to the record-book of the two communities, came from Yemen in Arabia and could not be one of the White Jews. 2. The independent origin of the two communities, as observed in the ritual and

religious observances, namely, the difference in the collection of hymns and songs for use at the feasts of the tabernacle and other occasions, in spite of the same liturgy. 3. The construction of the two Synagogues in 1344 A. D. and 1586 A. D. *i. e.*, 567 and 325 years ago, and that of the White Jews in 1666 *i. e.*, 245 years ago. 4. The existence of a tomb stone of the Black Jews 600 years old and that of the White Jews 200 years only. 5. The designation of the White Jews as *Paradésis* (foreigners) in public accounts and State records and that of the Black Jews as natives. 6. The opinion of the Great Rabbi of Jerusalem and of David de Beth Hillel about the Black Jews as true members of the "seed of Israel". 7. Enjoyment by the present Black Jews of the privileges mentioned in the charter.¹

The views of the various writers above referred to and the evidence of local facts, do not seem to support the contention of the White Jews, that the Black Jews do not belong to the Israelitish community. They do not at the same time possess any authentic records to establish their contention. In the absence of any correct data to substantiate their statement, it may be rightly inferred that the dark coloured brethren must have been the descendants of the earliest immigrants and that there has been considerable infusion of Indian blood in their veins either by intermarriages with women of the low caste, proselytism or by slavery or all combined. It cannot, at the same time, be admitted that the White Jews are free from any admixture of foreign blood, for some show clearly that there is.

There were persecutions of these people all over Europe, and many leaving their native homes were scattered in various parts of the earth, and very probably some might have come and settled in Cranganore amongst their co-religionists, the so called Black Jews, who might have welcomed the new comers and shared with them the high privileges they were long enjoying. The White Jews, when left to themselves, became by their commercial propensities financially more prosperous and wielded more influence with the European nations. But subsequently the Black Jews claimed equality with them and the right of intermarriage; and the White community, owing to the superiority of colour and purity of descent, might have held aloof, and this gave rise to constant misunderstandings and dissensions among them.

1. The Jews in India and the Far East, 83-86.

The social conditions of the Jews are very much governed by their religion, the Sabbath and dietary laws. Very seldom can they eat with their Christian or Muhammadan neighbours nor can they share their joys and sorrows. They take rest when others are working, and work, when others enjoy rest. They are rich in all the virtues, devout yet tolerant and strong in their reliance on Faith, Hope and more specially Charity. The cause of their social separation can be sought in the centuries of their oppression in Europe and other countries. Isolation, which has been called by Darwin the corner stone of breeders, is more operative in moulding the Jews as we meet them to day. They still look forward to the Messiah, a heaven-sent leader, under whose guidance they are to attain splendour and the supremacy which they claim to be theirs.



OLLUR CHURCH.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SYRIAN CHRISTIANS.

The Syrian Christians, who form the large majority of Christians in Cochin and Travancore are the representatives of the ancient oriental church on the West Coast of Southern India. They are generally called St. Thomas Christians or Nazarene Mappillas. In the last Census they numbered 102,834, 52,771 being males and 50,063 females.

The introduction of Christianity into Malabar and the subsequent history of the Christian Church, like the early history of the Cochin Jews, are buried in obscurity, and even the available information is also very complicated. A short account of it is given below. According to the traditions current among these people and implicitly believed by them, the introduction of Christianity and the establishment of the Original Church in Malabar in the year 52 A. D. are ascribed to the Apostle St. Thomas, who landed at Cranganore, or Musiris, converted many Brahmans and others, ordained two Presbyters, and also founded seven churches namely, Kottakayil, Kothamangalam, Niranam, Chayil, Quilon, Kodungallur (Cranganore) and Palur, the first six being in Travancore and Cochin, and the seventh in Chavakkad in South Malabar. He also founded eight Archbishops, of which Malabar was one.

The Apostle after his labours in these territories went to Mailapur and thence to China, and on his return to the former place, suffered martyrdom or met with an accidental death on St. Thomas Mount. His grave is shown in the present Roman Catholic Cathedral at St. Thome, and at this little Mount is a cave with a Cross and Pahlavi inscription, where he is said to have concealed himself for protection against his enemies. It is also said that, after the death of the clergy ordained by St. Thomas, the church fell into evil ways, and some of the

Origin and early
History of the Christian
Church in Ma-
labar.

converts, either afraid of persecution or influenced by persuasion or advice, returned to Hinduism. This apostacy is supposed to be due to the revival of the Sivite worship advocated by the celebrated Hindu preacher Manikka Vachakar.¹

There is nothing inherently improbable in the foregoing traditional account, which ascribes to an apostolic origin to the Malabar Church, since there was considerable trade between Cranganore and the Roman Empire in the early centuries of the Christian era. It is generally discredited owing to the absence of any reliable evidence to support it. The Acta Thomae (3rd century A. D.) gives the earliest detailed account of St. Thomas' Apostolic labours, and connects his mission with the king Gondophares, whom coins prove as having been an Indo-Parthian king with his capital at Kabul, and thus makes no reference to his journey to Southern India. Eusebius (264-340) makes St. Thomas the evangelist of Parthia. Dorotheus, Bishop of Tyre, at the end of the 3rd century, says that he preached to the Parthians, Medes and Persians, and died at Calamina,² a place in India mentioned by Nearchus, but is never properly identified.³ Rufinus in 371 A. D. says that the bones of St. Thomas were brought to Edessa from India which is evidently India Minor—the country west of the India known to medieval geographers. In remembrance of this a feast called *Duhrána* is celebrated by the Romo-Syrians and Jacobites of Malabar on the 3rd July of every year as a day of obligation. If Parthia and India Minor had been the scenes of the Apostle's labours, there would not have been the least likelihood of his having landed at Cranganore for the propagation of the Christian faith. Nevertheless, the tradition of Apostolic origin handed down from generation to generation is even now tenaciously clung to by the zealous Christians of these parts.

In the Council of Nice held in 325 A. D., the Christian interests in India were represented by Johannes, the Metropolitan of Persia and of Great India, and this proves the existence of Christianity during the fourth century. Some

1. The Indian Christians of St. Thomas, page 10.

2. Calamina is said to be another form of Galmonia a Syriac word meaning a little Mount (St. Thomas Mount).

3. Syrian Church in India, page 59.

critics, on the other hand, argue that India above referred to is not the Peninsular India but Parthia, Ethiopia, and Arabia, *i. e.*, countries outside India. This Council was held to discuss sectarian differences, to define the jurisdiction of the various ecclesiastical heads and to frame a code of general dogmas, doctrines, and rituals, and appointed four Patriarchs—Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria and Antioch. Jerusalem was constituted a fifth Patriarchate under Antioch; and the Catholicos of Bagdad, likewise subject to Antioch, was invested with the authority of managing the affairs of the Eastern Churches. Thus the Patriarch of Antioch was given the jurisdiction over the Indian Churches as early as the fourth century A. D.

There is also indisputable evidence to the existence of the Christians in Malabar afforded by Cosmas Indicopleustes¹, a Nestorian Christian, who going to Ceylon in the sixth century reported that there were churches there “and at Male (Malabar) where pepper grows, and at Kalliyana (Quilon) there is a Bishop usually ordained in Persia”. It is very probable that the church was founded in the fifth century by Nestorian Missionaries from Babylon; for, in spite of the decision of the Council of Ephesus in 431 A. D., the Nestorians flourished in the East, and the Patriarch of Babylon sent Missionaries as far as Tibet and China between the sixth and eleventh centuries.

Furthus Thomas Cana, a Nestorian merchant², is said to have arrived at Cranganore in the eighth or ninth century with a colony of 400 Christians from Bagdad, Nineveh and Jerusalem, including several priests, deacons and a bishop named Joseph of Edessa. He is said to have built a church in Mahadevapattanam and followed Syrian Liturgy. It is said that he married two native wives—Nayar and Mukkuvan—and that the descendants of their offspring are respectively known as Northerners (Vadakkumbhagakkars) and Southerners (Thekkumbhagakkars) of the present day.³ “Another version regarding the division into two sections is that the Southerners were

1. It is said that an anonymous Bishop was ordained in Malabar and that no mention is made of any heresy.

2. It is said that he was not a Nestorian merchant, but an Aramian merchant of Jerusalem.

3. Madras District Gazetteers, Malabar and Angingo, page 203.

the new immigrants brought by Thomas Cana and settled in the South street in Cranganore, while the Northerners were the old indigenous Christians who had resided in the North street. "The Southerners are fairer in complexion and more handsome than the Northerners. They are endogamous, and observe more of the Hindu customs".¹

The Christians of Malabar seem to have attained high social and commercial importance, which is testified to by the privileges specified in the copper plate grants given to them by kings Veera Raghava Chakravarthi and Sthanu Ravi Gupta. These are still preserved in Kottayam. The first of these is said to have been given to Thomas Cana, though there is nothing to connect it with him. The dates assigned to these grants are 774 and 824 A. D. respectively. But recent researches on both paleographical and astrological grounds assign them to the 13th or 14th century. The privileges conferred on these grants were among those enjoyed by the subordinate local chiefs and the Veera Raghava's grant makes the donee the sovereign merchant of Kerala.² "They are said to have attained a high position during these early centuries, and this is corroborated by the embassy of Alfred in 833 A. D. to the shrine of St. Thomas in India which returned with a rich load of spices and pepper".

Very little of the history of the Malabar Church is known for six centuries prior to the advent of the Portuguese. The church appears to have been more or less in connection with one of the Eastern Patriarchs, Nestorian or Jacobite, who sent Bishops from time to time. They were also, at times, managed without any Bishops. Marco Polo, who visited the coast in the 13th century, mentions the prevalence of Nestorianism among the St. Thomas Christians of Malabar as well as the legends regarding the death of the saint in India. In the next century three Latin Missionaries—Friar Jordanus, John of Monte Corvina, and John de Marignote—visited Malabar and made converts. In fact, until the arrival of the Portuguese in Malabar, the Christians belonged to the Nestorian Church.³

1. Travancore Manual, page 127. Madras District Gazetteers Malabar and Anjingo, page 203.

2. Cochin State Manual, page 219.

3. The Cochin State Manual, page 19.

History of the Syrian Church during the Portuguese period.

When the Portuguese came to India, they were glad to welcome the Syrians as their brother Christians, and never thought of interfering with their doctrines; but they had soon to change their attitude towards them. These Syrian Christians had their mother Church at Babylon with their Patriarch at Mosul in Asia Minor, and knew nothing of Papal supremacy. They were Nestorians *i. e.*, followers of Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, who was condemned by the general Council of Ephesus 431 A. D., for the assertion that Jesus was both God and Man, and that he became God only at his baptism; while the accepted faith was that he was God even in the womb of his mother.

The Nestorian faith was shocking to the Portuguese, who, after the conquest of territories and establishment of their capital or head quarter at Goa, soon entered on a policy of conversion and resolved to prevent the Syrian Christians from communion with the eastern Patriarch. Franciscan and Dominican Friars and Jesuits all conjointly worked to place the Malabar Church under the authority of Rome. They established the Inquisition at Goa in 1560, and a Jesuit Church and Seminary were founded at Vaippacotta near Cranganore in 1584, and finally at the Synod of Diamper (Udayamperur) in 1590 Menezes, Archbishop of Goa, with the aid of the Inquisition succeeded in particularly inducing the whole of the Syrian Church to acknowledge the Papal supremacy, and confirm to the Latin doctrine and ritual by disowning "the heresies and false doctrines sown among them and introduced by schismatical prelates and Nestorian heretics that governed them, under the obedience of the Patriarch of Babylon".¹ They were thus incorporated with the Roman Catholic converts of the Jesuits in one community under the authority of the Archbishop of Goa, who, with a view to ensure success, ordained many new clergy from among the Syrians, altered

1. Madras District Gazetteers Malabar and Anjingo, page 203-204.

At the Synod of Diamper they were accused of the following practices and opinions—That they had married wives, that they owned, but two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's supper, that they neither invoked saints nor worshipped images, nor believed in purgatory, that they had no other orders of dignity in the church than bishop, priest, or deacon. Asiatic Researches by Claudius Buchanan.

their Church Service Books to suit the Roman doctrines and burned their invaluable manuscripts of theology and church history. After two months' hard work in visiting and organizing, he returned to Goa, but the government of the Jesuit Archbishop which lasted for half a century was very much disliked by a large majority of the Syrian Christians, who applied to the Patriarchs of Babylon and Antioch for a Bishop. A man named Ahatāla was accordingly sent from Antioch, but was intercepted by the Portuguese, who took him to Goa, and shipped him off to Europe. This provoked a large body of the Syrian Christians, who under the Archdeacon Thomas met at the church of Coonen Cross at Mattanchery in 1653 and renounced their allegiance to Rome. It is said that out of 400,000 persons only 400 adhered to the Portuguese Jesuit Archbishop. This separation led to the two existing divisions, namely, *Pazhayakūru*, (those who adhered to the Romish Church according to the Synod of Diamper) and the *Puthankūru* (Jacobite Syrians who, after the oath at Coonen Cross, got a Bishop Mar Gregory from Antioch and now follow the Jacobite ritual).

After the failure of the Jesuits, Carmalites were sent for the conversion of the Syrians to the Romish Church, and they succeeded in winning them back to a very considerable extent under Father Joseph, whom the Pope appointed in 1659, without the knowledge of the King of Portugal, as Vicar Apostolic of Malabar. For the next two hundred years the Carmalite Vicars Apostolic continued to govern the two communities, the Romo-Latin and Romo-Syrian communities in Malabar, but the King of Portugal in virtue of his *Jus Patronale* appointed Archbishops of Cranganore and Bishops of Cochin whose jurisdiction was confined to the actual limit of the Portuguese territories, and which ceased to exist with the rise of the Dutch power.

With the British supremacy, the struggle between the Portuguese Jesuit Archbishops of Cranganore and the Carmalite Vicars Apostolic of Verapoly broke out again, and this was brought to an end by the Papal Bull *Multa Præclare* of 1838, which abolished the Sees of Cranganore and Cochin and placed them under the authority of the Archbishop of Verapoly. Matters were finally settled by the Concordat of

1886, which defined the limits of the jurisdiction of the rival priests, and the Romo-Syrian community was placed under the government of the Archbishop of Verapoly. In 1877, an assistant to him was appointed, and he had charge of the Romo-Syrians; but he was in 1887 replaced by two European Vicars Apostolic, and these again were in 1896 replaced by three Native Syrian priests who were consecrated as Vicars Apostolic of *Trichur, Ernakulam and Chengánassery*. Owing to the disputes between the Northists (Northerners) and Southists (Southerners) in Travancore in point of social status, a new bishopric was created at Chenganassery, and the former Bishop has his head quarters at Kottayam.

By the influence of the Portuguese Missionaries, many Hindus especially of low castes became converts to the Latin Church, and at the beginning of the 19th century they were socially divided into the three distinct communities, namely, Ezhu-noottikars (the 700), the Anjoottikars (the 500), and Munnoottikars (the 300), the first two of which are ever trying to assert their superiority in status over each other. The origin and early history of these communities are very much disputed; and special vernacular books and pamphlets are published with accounts of their origin and social status. They do not admit that they were recent converts, but claim to be the descendants of St. Thomas Christians with subsequent additions from low Hindu castes.

These accounts appear mostly to be cooked up to serve their own purpose, and the names denoting each community are being disclaimed by the members thereof.

There are certain letters of St. Francis Xavier and some Vatacan documents, which have been recently cited by some of the Romo-Syrian clergy in Travancore and Cochin, in support of a contention that their ancestors, the Syrian Christians on this coast, were not Nestorian heretics, but were Chaldeans of an Oriental rite in communion with Rome and holding the Catholic faith. They contend that the Portuguese did not convert them from any heresy but only made them submit to the jurisdiction of the Bishops of the Latin rite, having cut off their relation with the Chaldean Catholic Patriarch of Babylon. They saw that

Romo-Lat'nites or
Latincars.

The Syrian Church
not Nestorian.

the saints were notoriously keen in detecting heresy, and they contended that the aged Bishop described by St. Francis as serving God for forty-five years in this country could not have been a heretic and also that the Syrian Christians for whom St. Francis asked indulgences could not have been in schism. Further it is pointed out that the Portuguese garrison at Cananore heard the Syrian Mass of the Bishops, and that the Syrian Christians at Quilon paid money to Marignoli as the Pope's delegate. They now deny the credit of the Portuguese in the conversion of the Syrian Christians to the Roman Catholic faith; and it is said that the word Nestorian is very loosely used by the Portuguese historians and often denotes only orientals, and not necessarily heretics. But all Protestant writers unanimously agree in describing them as Nestorian in their doctrines, (¹. ².)

The Jacobite Syrians who separated from the Roman Syrians chose as their Bishop Mar Thomas Jacobite Syrians. who was, according to tradition, one of the descendants of the Brahman converts of St. Thomas, and was consecrated in 1665 by Mar Gregory, who was sent out by the Patriarch of Antioch. They adopted views quite opposed to their own, namely, "that the divine and human natures in our Lord were so united that there was but one nature, *i.e.*, the Godhead and manhood mingled like wine and water." Here they are said to have been guilty of having confounded the "Essence or Being or Natures" of Christ." Hence they are called Monophysites "or those who held only one nature" or Jacobites.³ This change was made more easily owing to the destruction of Nestorian books at and after the Synod in 1599. This division of the church continued to acknowledge the supremacy of Antioch, and its history is uneventful till the commencement of the 19th century, when the Church Missionary Society came on the field and became friendly with it on the advice of Dr. Claudius Buchanan and Colonel Munro the British Resident. The Mission established a College for the instruction of the Syrian priests and deacons under the management of Rev. Fenn. The scriptures were translated. Village schools were started. All these were

1. History of Christianity in Travancore, pages 28—30.

2. The Orthodoxy of St. Thomas Christians, pages 5—55.

3. Gibbon's Decline and Fall, Vol. IV,—Chapter XLVII (1 I).

done with the approval of the Metran, but the conservative party among them began to fear that the Syrian Church would be brought under Protestant control.

In 1825, some of them appealed to the Patriarch of Antioch, and Mar Athanesius was sent out to replace Mar Dionysius, who was believed to be too much inclined to Protestantism. The dispute was settled finally in 1840 by the withdrawal of the Church Missionary Society from all connection, with the Syrian Church. Since then, their work for the Syrians was completely closed, but there were among them some who, having imbibed a love for the Missionaries, appreciated their teachings and expositions of the Holy Scriptures and the use of prayer in the vernacular. Fortunately for them, there was in the Kottayam College a pious *Kattanâr* or priest known as Abraham, who sympathising with the spiritual aims of the Missionaries returned to his parish at *Mârâmannu*, and resolved to carry out the principles which lie at the root of all religious reforms by conducting the worship of God and preaching in a tongue understood by the people. Among the changes he introduced in his own parish were the restoration of the Holy Communion in both kinds, communicating the people during service, protest against Masses performed for money and abolition of prayers to the Saints.¹ Malpan Abraham thus became the Wycliff of the Syrian Church of Malabar, and the reform movement, having been started, gained more and more sympathisers. The clergy began to preach to the people in Malayalam, and scriptures were read in their families. The students of the Kottayam College and elsewhere were awakened by the reformed Christianity and were inspired with admiration for its life and liberty. The movement went on prospering after the death of Abraham under his nephew Mathew, who became Metropolitan of the Syrian Church in Travancore and Cochin and was as such recognized by the British Resident and the rulers of the two Native States. Before his death he consecrated to be his suffragan his cousin Mar Thomas Athanesius, who succeeded to the Episcopal Throne in 1877, and was loyally honoured by the reforming clergy and laity. The Jacobite Syrians were thus split up into two parties, one of which was the Vava's party under Mar Dionysius consecrated by the Jacobite Patriarch, who led those that were opposed to the reformation; and the

1. The Indian Christians of St. Thomas, page 30.

other (Mekran's party) under Mar Mathew Athanesius who headed the reform party. The two factions were quite inimical to each other, struggled for mastery by a protracted litigation in the High Court of Travancore and the Chief Court of Cochin, and the dispute was settled by a decision in favour of the non-reforming party.

Besides the three divisions above mentioned, there is a small party of Chaldean or Nestorian Syrians, who
Chaldeans. seceded from the Romo-Syrians in 1856 owing to the refusal of the Archbishop of Verapoly to ordain candidates for holy orders, who had been trained by native Malpans in the smaller Seminaries. They are now presided over by a Bishop ordained by the Patriarch of Babylon. They are only found in and around Trichur.

There remains another branch of the present Jacobite Syrian sect, in which the Bishops ordained
Bishop of Anur. their own successors without recognising the necessity of ordination by the Patriarch of Antioch. The members of this sect are found in Chavakkad. They were the adherents of the Bishops of Anur or Thoshiyur near Chavakkad, a small See founded in the eighteenth century by Mar Cyril, who quarrelling with the Jacobite Bishop Mar Thomas got himself consecrated by one of the three Bishops sent out by the Patriarch of Antioch to validate the consecration of Mar Thomas.

The Church Missionary Society commenced their work at
Protestants Trichur in 1842, and then at Kunnankulam, in 1854. Each station has its outstations, of which Trichur has eleven and Kunnankulam nine. Most of these outstations are in Cochin and a few in the British territory.

The Christians in Cochin belong to various denominations
Different sects. as shown below :—

1. Roman Catholics including those who perform the ceremonies of the Church in Latin and in Syriac.
2. Jacobite Syrians including the reformed Syrians, of St. Thomas Syrians.
3. Chaldean Syrians.
4. Protestants.

A MARRIAGE GROUP OF ROMO-LATINITES.

With the exception of the Chittur Taluk, Syrian Christians are found all over the State. The Romo-

Habitations.

Syrians live in the interior, by the side of the backwater; while the Jacobite Syrians reside in the interior of the Talappilli and Kamayanur Taluks. The Latinites are found on the sea-coast and the Chaldean Syrians in Trichur.

Their houses, constructed in various fashions like those of the Brahmans and Nayars, are situated in gardens abounding in cocoanut and other fruit bearing trees, while those in Trichur Irinjalakuda, Kunnankulam and other places, are in two rows on both sides of the public roads with their church at one extremity. The houses of the upper and middle classes, which are generally quadrangular with an open space *Mittam* in the centre and with broad verandahs in front and consist of several rooms, and upper storeys, are all built of laterite blocks and wood, while those of the poor are thatched mud huts with one or two rooms and a small verandah in front, and the kitchen either adjoining them or in a separate shed outside. The verandahs of the houses in streets are often used as work-shops or shops containing the articles of merchandise for sale. The houses of the rich and middle classes are as well furnished as those in the corresponding Sudra families; and their domestic utensils are more or less of the same kind. But the former cannot approach the latter in point of keeping their houses, furniture and utensils neat and clean. Many among the middle and lower classes rear pigs, which keep the surroundings of the houses and even the streets very insanitary. Their domestic servants are either members of their own community or Pulayans. The women of the latter caste are, in rural parts, employed for sweeping, cleaning vessels and other domestic works.

Each division among the Syrian Christians has become like

Marriage Prohibitions.

a Hindu caste, an endogamous sect with no intermarriage between the members of one sect and another, though no objection is made to interdining. Thus there is no intermarriage between the Romo-Syrians and the Jacobite Syrians. The Catholics avoid all conjugal relations among relatives, and even cousins up to the fourth degree are prohibited from intermarriage. When cousins of the second, third and fourth degrees wish to form matrimonial alliances, the Pope's dispensation is

necessary. Family status, and social position of the bride and bridegroom are also considered before the proposal for marriage. No intermarriage is allowed between the descendants of a high caste convert and those of a low caste one. The old caste prejudices are still in existence, though in religion they are Christians.

Among the Syrian Christians, as among the Jonakan Mapillas, there are many survivals of their ancient superstitions, and the old caste prejudices, are still found among the different sections of this community. Early marriage, as among the Hindus, was formerly in vogue among them, but now the marriageable age of boys and girls is extended to sixteen and twelve respectively. Among them wedding takes place on Sundays, and it may be celebrated either in the bride's or bridegroom's parish church. In the case of the marriage of a girl to a young man with the consent of their parents, the marriage agreements have to be concluded in the presence of the parish priests, who on successive Sundays before the wedding have the bans published in the two churches. All preliminary arrangements for the wedding are made in the bride's house in the presence of the friends and relatives of both sides, and the dowry which is a prominent feature of the Syrian wedding is also then settled. It should consist of an odd number of rupees tied up in a cloth. On the Thursday before the wedding the house is well decorated with rice flour, and on the Saturday the marriage pandal is put up. The first ceremonial takes place on Saturday, and on the next morning both the bride and bridegroom attend Mass, the bridegroom entering the church before the bride. At present, the bridal pair are in European costume, the bride being completely decked out with ornaments either her own or those she can borrow for the occasion. Before leaving his house the bridegroom gives *Dakshina* (presents of cloth and money), to the *Guru* or preceptor after due obeisance, and is accompanied by a best man, usually his sister's husband, who brings the *Tali*. After Mass, a tithe, *Pathuvaram*, of the bride's dowry is paid to the church as the marriage fee, and a further fee to the priest and a similar fee, *Kaimuttupanam*, to the Bishop. The marriage service is then read, and at its end the bridegroom ties the *tali*

Marriage customs
among the Jacobite
Syrians.

round the bride's neck with the thread taken from her veil, making a special knot, while the priest holds the *tali* in front. The priest and the bridegroom put a veil (*mantrakodi*) over her head. The *tali*, which is the marriage badge, should be worn as long as she lives, and, at her death, buried with her.

The bridal pair return home in state, accompanied by their friends and relations. Silk umbrellas being held over them. At the gate they are met by the bride's sister, carrying a lighted lamp, and she washes the bridegroom's feet. The married couple go to the pandal, where they are conspicuously seated and given sweets and plantains by the priest and representatives of the family to the accompaniment of the women's *Kurava* and in the presence of the guests who are seated in order of precedence, the chief persons being seated on white cloths, with black rugs underneath (*Vellayum Karimbatawum*), traditionally a regal honour.¹ The bride and bridegroom are then led into the house by the best man and the bride's uncle, when the bride is directed to put the right foot first as she enters. The guests are sumptuously fed. Before meals are served, they double up their leaves, and this is believed to be symbolical of the royal marriage of eating off a double leaf. Until the following Wednesday the best man sleeps with the bridegroom in the bridal chamber, the bride occupying another room.

On Wednesday evening comes the ceremony called *Nalam Kuli* or fourth day bath. The bridegroom and the best man being in the room lock up the door, when the bride's mother knocks at the door and begs the bridegroom to come out, which he at last does on hearing a song called *Váthil-chura-páttu*, describing the virtues and attractions of the bride. The married couple, newly dressed and decked out, go to the pandal, perform *Pradikshanam* round a lighted lamp, and the bridegroom gives presents of cloths to the bride's uncle, mother and grand parents; after which they are both escorted to the bridal chamber, which in the interval has been cleaned and prepared for them. The next morning the bridegroom with the bride and her party goes to his house where also he goes through the same ceremonial as on the wedding day. The bride's party are similarly treated to a grand dinner. The marriage is now at an end, but on the following Sunday the bride and

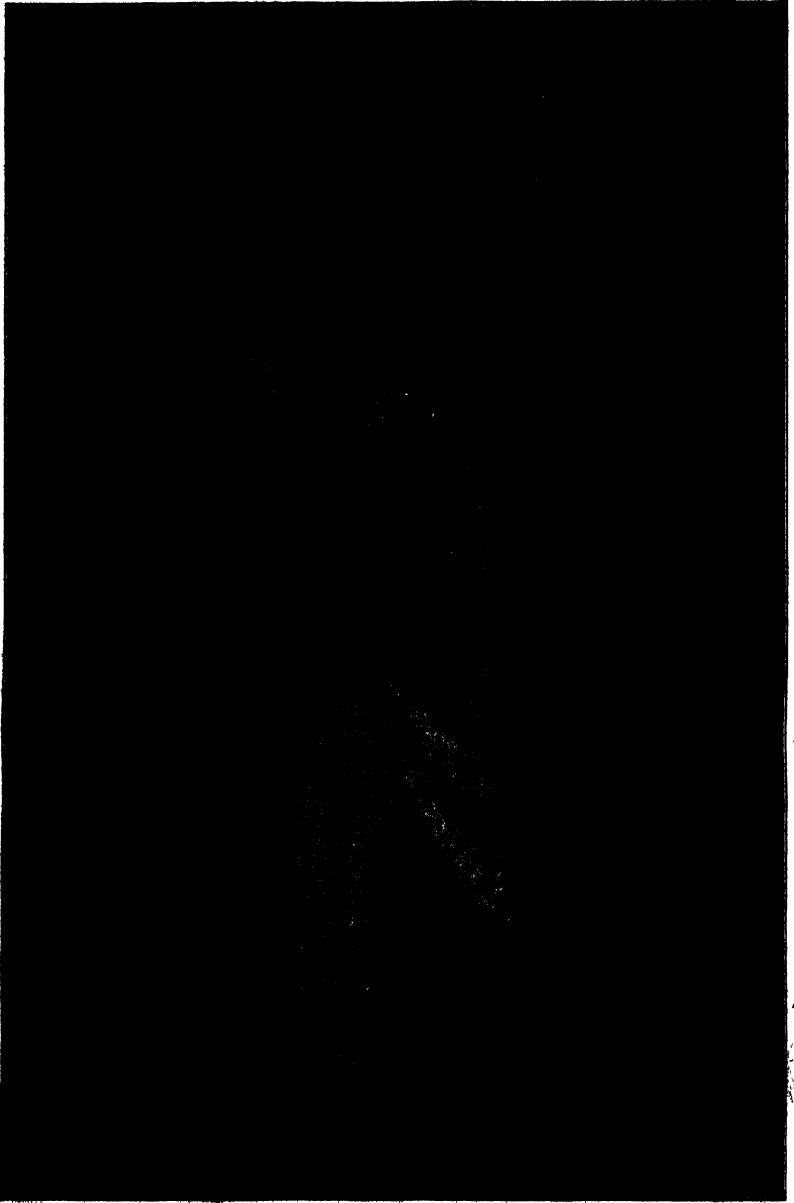
1. Vide Chapter II, ante page 24-25.

bridegroom should attend the Mass in the parish church of the latter, if they were married in the bride's.

When a young woman is about to become a mother the ceremony of *Pulikudi*, is performed which is similar to that which is performed for a Nayar woman. It is not now performed by some among them. The pregnant woman is taken to her parents' house during the seventh month, where she remains for two or three months after delivery. When she is in pain of childbirth, a midwife of her own community, a barber or a Velan woman attends on her along with her mother and others. After delivery both the mother and the baby are bathed, and the former during her confinement, is under a prescribed course of diet and treatment; immediately after bath, the child is fed, with drops of honey in which gold has been rubbed, and the mother is under pollution for ten days, after which she is purified by a bath, and her room is well swept and cleaned. Baptism takes place on the fourteenth day, amongst the southern Jacobites, but amongst other divisions on the fifty-sixth day. The ceremony of feeding the baby with rice for the first time takes place in the fifth or the sixth month, when the child is presented by the mother's parents with a gold Cross in the case of a boy, or a similar gold ornament or *tulucam* if a girl, to be worn round the neck.

Among the Romo-Syrians, marriage is celebrated according to the rules of the Catholic Church when boys and girls are fourteen and twelve years of age respectively. When the marriage of a girl to a young man is proposed by the parents of the contracting parties, a day is fixed for the parents of the conjugal pair, their relatives and friends to meet at the house of the bride to formally talk the matter over, and to settle the dowry which is generally expressed in terms either in so many fanoms (a fanam—four annas and seven pies), or in so many fanams weight of gold. A written promise on a piece of cadjan leaf by the bride's father to give his daughter in marriage to the boy selected, and a similar promise by the bridegroom's father to accept her, are then made, and the pieces of cadjan leaves on which the promises are written, are mutually exchanged in the presence of those assembled to make themselves sure that their promises will be kept up. The members assembled are treated to a grand

Marriage Customs
among the Romo-
Syrians.



A ROMO-SYRIAN BRIDE

dinner, and the day for the celebration of the wedding is also then fixed. The payment of a tithe—*Pathuvaram*—seven and a half per cent of the bride's dowry as the marriage fee is made to the church, out of which a small fee to the priest and clergy of the parish. The bride and bridegroom go to the bride's parish church, attend Mass and announce their intention of marriage, when the priests (*Kathanars*) of the parishes to which they belong have the bans called on three successive Sundays, to see if any objection is urged by any of the relatives or of the community to the wedding, in the absence of which they give their formal sanction for the proposed union. On a Monday the wedding is celebrated, though no objection is held against the other days of the week except Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, when they are forbidden to eat meat. A pandal is put up in front of the house and decorated. On the wedding day the bride and bridegroom¹ well dressed and decorated and accompanied by their relatives and friends, go to the church and attend the ordinary Mass. He is accompanied by a best man, who is generally his sister's husband who brings the *tali*. The marriage service is then read, and at its conclusion the priest consecrating the *tali* hands it over to the bridegroom, who ties it round the bride's neck. The priest hands over to the bridegroom a veil *Mantraodi* which he puts over the bride's head. The *tali*, which is the marriage badge should not be removed as long as she remains a wife and should be given to the church at her husband's death. The bridal party then returns to the bride's house in state and large silk umbrellas are held over the married couple. They are seated in a conspicuous place in the pandal and given sweets and plantains first by the senior members of the family and then by others. The bride and bridegroom are then led into the house by the best man and the bride's uncle, and the guests are fed in order of rank. The guests depart, and the married couple stay there, and on the next morning the bridegroom returns to his house with the bride and her party, where similar formalities are gone through and the bride's party are similarly treated. The married couple are again taken to the bride's house and after a stay of a few days there, they go back to the bridegroom's house. The wedding is then over.

1. In former times the bridegroom was dressed in a neat loin cloth with a knife and style stuck to his girdle. It is now given up.

No special day is chosen for their nuptials, which is left to the convenience of the bridal pair.

Among the Romo-Syrians when a girl comes of age or when a woman is in her menses, she conducts herself, in such a way that nobody knows anything about it. She bathes on the third or the fourth day. She is not under seclusion and observes no pollution for the supposed impurity.

When a young woman is about to become a mother no special ceremony is performed for her, but during the seventh month she is taken to her parents' house where the delivery takes place. The woman's relatives who accompany her are sumptuously fed. At the time of child birth a midwife of the community or a barber woman is engaged for any necessary help. As soon as the delivery is over, the woman bathes, if she is not seriously unwell, and the baby is also bathed in warm water. The woman in confinement is subject to a course of treatment and special diet for forty days, and she does not go for her usual routine until after ninety days. The Romo-Syrians observe no pollution for this and for death.

Scripture does not allow polygamy and polyandry among them, but widow marriage is in vogue. Women that go wrong are severely punished and prevented from misconducting themselves again.

Jacobites and St. Thomas Christians use the Syriac liturgy of St. James, but few, even among the priests understand Syriac; in the Reformed Syrian churches, a Malayalam translation of the Syriac liturgy has now been generally adopted. The Jacobites say masses for the dead and believe in purgatory. They invoke the Virgin Mary venerate the cross and relics of the saints. They prescribe auricular confession before mass, and at mass administer the bread dipped in the wine and recite the eastern form of Nicæan creed. Jacobite Syrians observe the seven sacraments while the Reformed Syrians have only three namely, baptism, holy orders and mass.

The Jacobites observe the ordinary festivals of the church. The day of the patron saint of each church is treated with special pomp; and on the offering made on that day the priests largely depend for their income. They keep Lent, which they call the fifty days' fast, strictly from the Sunday

before the Ash Wednesday, abstaining from meat, fish, milk, ghee, and liquor. On Monday and Thursday they eat a special kind of unsweetened cake marked in the centre of which the *Kārana-van* of the family should drive a nail and drink a kanji of rice and cocoanut milk. The meal is said to symbolise the Passover and the last supper and the nail is supposed to be driven into the eyes of Judas Iscariot.

Their churches are rectangular buildings with flat or Jacobite Syrian Church. arched wooden roofs and white washed facades; they have no spire, but the chancel which is at the east end is usually somewhat higher than the nave. Between the chancel and the body of the church is a curtain which is drawn while the priest consecrates the elements at the Mass. Right and left of the chancel are two rooms, the vestry and sacristy. At the west end is a gallery, in which the *priests* sometimes live. Most churches contain only one altar, and that in the chancel.

The Syrian Bishops are called *Métrans*. They are celibates and live on the contributions of their churches. They wear purple robes and black silk cowls figured with golden Crosses, a big gold Cross round the neck and a ring on the fourth finger of the right hand. Bishops are nominated by their predecessors from the body of *Rambáns* who are selected by the priests and elders in advance by the episcopate. *Metrans* are buried in their robes in a sitting posture. Their priests are called *Kathanars* and should strictly pass through the offices of ostiary reader, exorcist, acolyte, sub-deacon and deacon before becoming priests, but the first three offices do not exist. The priestly office is hereditary. The Jacobite priests until the arrival of the Patriarch in 1875 wore white cassocks, now they wear mostly darkblue. The Reformers keep the ancient white robe with a girdle.”¹

According to the Census of 1911, the Jacobite Syrians numbered 20,025, and the Reformed Syrians 596. In the Cochin State their chief centres are Kunnankulam, Mulanthuruthi, and Tri-punithura, and their ecclesiastical head is assisted by two *Métrans*, and two out of the six consecrated by the Patriarch. They own churches and chapels, and are educationally strong in Lower Secondary and Vernacular schools while

The present conditions of the Non-Roman Syrians.

the reformed church of St. Thomas has also two Metrans namely, Titus Mar Thoma II. and the Thozhiur Bishop. The church styles itself the St. Thomas Syrians Church, and own one hundred and seventeen churches and chapels and two-hundred Kathanars. They number one-fourth of the community.

The following are the main points in which the Syrian Church differs from the Church of Rome:—"The Jacobite Syrians reject the supremacy of the Pope, acknowledge the supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures, hold no traditions of equal or co-ordinate rank with the scriptures, allow the translation of the scriptures without comment for perusal by the people, do not receive the decrees of the Council of Trent, do not enforce the celibacy of the clergy, nor allow images in churches. They recognize orthodox churches as branches of Christ's Holy Catholic Church, and accept the canons of the first Council of Nice, 325 A. D., as well as those of Constantinople, 381 A. D., and Euphesus, 431 A. D., rejecting only those of Chalcedon twenty years later."¹

The main characteristics of the Syrian Church are:—

1. "The Syrian Church presents an undeniable instance of an ancient church preserved in its purity for the past sixteen or seventeen centuries on the coast of Malabar, and has never acknowledged the supremacy of the Roman pontiff nor his peculiar dogmas after the Coonen Cross revolt."

2. "The church exhibits an independent testimony to the Apostolical polity of the church in the three-fold order of bishop, priest and deacon as sketched by St. Paul in his Epistles to Timothy and Titus and deducible from the St. John's Epistles to the angels of the seven Asiatic churches written sixty years after the promulgation of the Gospel, and uniformly acknowledged by the ecclesiastical writers of the age immediately next to that of the Apostles."²

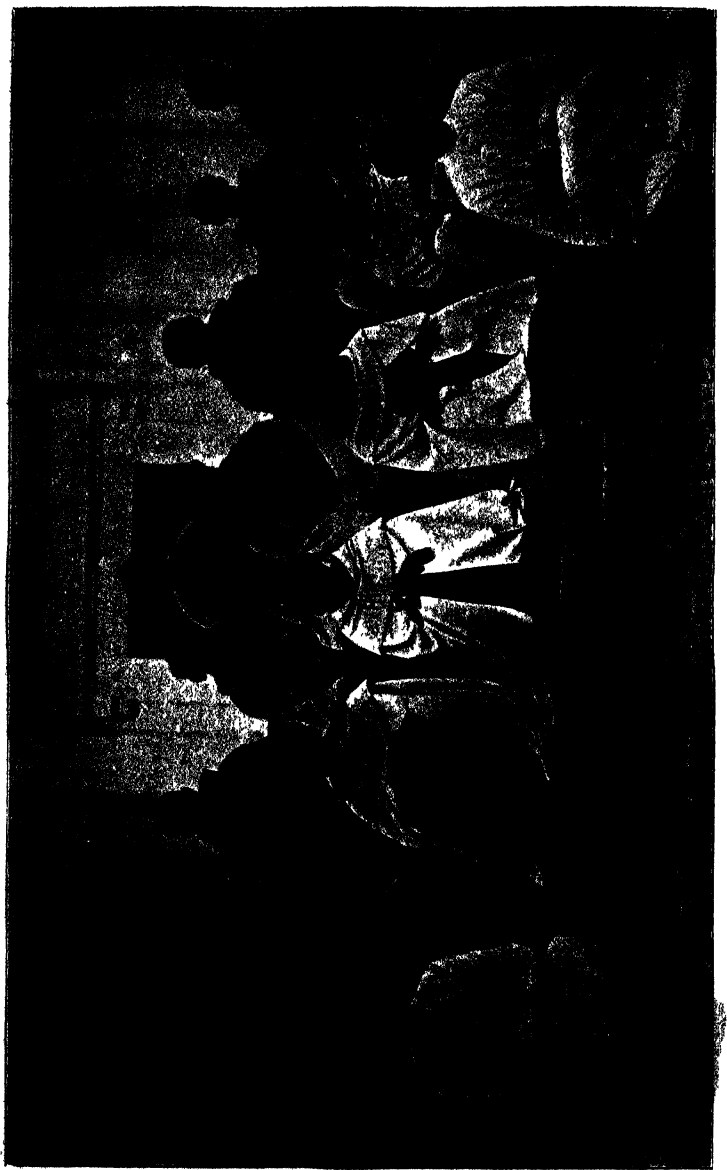
Reformed Syrians wished to multiply the copies of the Syrian scriptures, to translate the scriptures into Malayalam, to establish schools on scripture principles, to improve the education of the clergy, and make use of the vernacular in preaching and expounding the Gospel.³

The Jacobite Syrian Church contains the very essence of Popery without the supremacy of the Church of Rome. The

1. The Indian Christians of St. Thomas, page 121-23.

2. do do do 124.

3. do do do 125.



ROMIO SYRIAN MONKS

great body believe in transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass for the living and the dead, prayers for the departed, purgatory, worship of the Virgin Mary, veneration of the saints, prayers in an unknown tongue, extreme unction, allow pictures in their churches representing God the father, prayers to the altar and the chancel, connected with which are the elevation of the host, the burning of incense, the ringing of bells at the time of that elevation, the priest receiving Mass alone.¹

At funerals except among the reformed sect, it is usual for each of the dead man's relations to bring a cloth to serve as a shroud. Before the body is lowered into the grave, holy oil is poured into the eyes, nostrils and ears. The mourners are under pollution, and fast till the day of the *Pula kuli*, (purification), and till then masses should be said daily for the dead. The *Pula kuli* is performed usually on the eleventh day, but may be deferred till the fifteenth, seventeenth or the twenty-first or sometimes till the forty first. Incense is applied to the mourners, while hymns are sung and prayers offered. Each then gives a contribution of money to the priest, and receives in return a few grains of cumin. A feast is given to the neighbours and the poor. On the fortieth day there is another feast, at which meat is eaten by the mourners for the first time. A requiem Mass should be said each month on the day of death for twelve months, and on the first anniversary the mourning concludes with a feast.

When a member of the Catholic community is dead, the corpse is well washed and neatly dressed and then placed in a coffin, which is neatly decorated and has lighted candles placed on three or four sides with a crucifix between them. The parish priest attends the funeral to offer prayers in the house on behalf of the spirit of the departed. The body is then taken to the church and buried in the cemetery, when also similar prayers are offered. In the case of the rich, the funeral processions are very grand. On the third day in the case of boys and on the seventh in the case of the grown up, the mourners attend the church and offer prayers for the soul of the dead. These three or seven days are considered as days of pollution, though they do not now-a-days observe it. On the seventh, thirty-first or forty-first day similar ceremonies are performed and prayers offered for the dead. In some cases, either on the seventh,

1. The Indian Christians of St. Thomas p. 129.

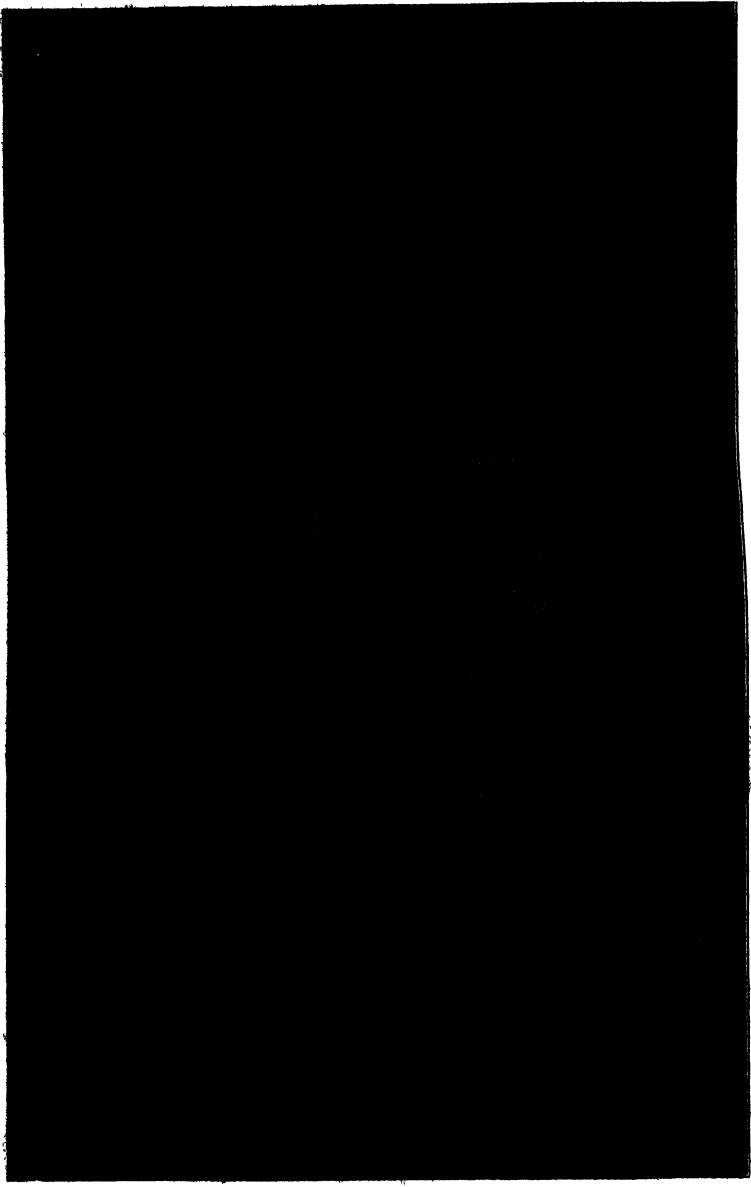
ninth, eleventh or on the fifteenth day, a ceremony called *Pulakuli* (bath to be freed from pollution) is performed. The members of the family bathe; and the priest of the parish performs some ceremonies and offers prayers both in the church and in the family of the dead, when those who are invited are treated to a feast. Each of the guests contributes something for the ceremony. A commemorative rite corresponding to *śradha* is also performed by some at the end of the year. Among the Latinites, the chief mourners and the members of the community who have attended the burial are sumptuously entertained after the funeral, but this practice does not exist among the Romo-Syrians.

The Romo-Syrians use the Chaldean liturgy, and the Latinites the liturgy of the Church of Rome. Their daily religious routine consists in the worship of one true God (the father, the son, and the holy ghost) with prayers and prostrations three times a day, and a special prayer at night to the Almighty, Blessed Virgin and the saints in which all the members of the family join. Similar prayers are offered both when they go to bed at night and rise up in the morning, before and after meals, and also when they go to and return from work. Sundays are their days of Sabbath, when they attend the ceremonies in their parish church and spend the day in devotion and in the perusal of religious books. Besides Sundays they have other holidays or days of obligation, namely, Feasts of the Nativity of Jesus Christ, Circumcision, Epiphany and Ascension, Feasts of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Virgin Mary, feasts of the Apostles Peter and Paul and all the saints, as also Duhra. These days were originally thirteen, but were reduced to eight by a recent Papal Bull. They also observe the ordinary festivals of the church, the day of the patron saint of each being celebrated with great pomp; they have seven sacraments, baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, extreme unction, holy orders and matrimony.

Baptism is called *Gnāna snanam* in Malayalam (bath to attain wisdom) and *Māmodisa* in Syriac. It takes place on the seventh day, when the god-father and god-mother of the baby are treated to a feast. Among the Latins a grand feast on this occasion is celebrated in the

Roman Catholic
Religion.

Baptism.



INTERIOR OF THE OLLUR CHURCH.

house of the mother at the expense of her husband. The baby is also named that day.

The common names among the Syrian Christians are
Baptismal names. George (Gevarugesa, Vargisa, Varki); Thomas (Thomma, Thoman, Umman); John (Yohanan, Lonan); Luke (Lukkosa, Koshi); Mathew (Mathai, Mathan, Mathu); Joseph (Yoseph, Ouseph); Jacob (Chakko); Peter (Pathros, Pathappan); Alexander (Chandy); Isaac (Itti, Ittak); Abraham (Ittyera); most of the Gospel names are in use among them. It may be seen from the list of ordinary names given above, that they are so badly distorted as to defy identification. In no sects among the Christians are such Gospel names alone in use as among the Syrian Christians, and it is believed that they are the appellations of their early Christian ancestors. The common names among women are Mary (Mariyam); Achi, Achambila, Sarah, Eliza (Elisa), Ali (Elizabath), Anna, Annapennu, Eunica (Unichi), Rebecca (Akka), Rosa. Some of the common names among the Latinites are (1) Otambattil Avara Kappithan, (Captain), Kochiyil Lodikar, (2) Nanayil Chandy Alparis (Alfares), Mundiriyil Avara Kappithan, Kuttasseriyl Varki Araju. These names denote that some of the members of the community are the descendants of those who had served in the Portuguese army in former times; and the old military titles are still kept up.

The Catholics are, as has been said, of two divisions,
Church Govern-ment. Romo-Syrians and Romo-Latins. The former are under the spiritual government of two Bishops or Vicars Apostolic, whose headquarters are at Trichur and Ernakulam, and are assisted by a Vicar General and a council of four members. Under their jurisdiction are parishes with churches, each of which is governed by a priest ordained from among themselves. The affairs of every Syrian Church are managed by two or more Kaikkars or wardens periodically elected from among the parishioners approved by the Bishops. They are the trustees of the church property, and with the priest exercise considerable powers in religious and social matters in the parish. The priests receive a salary of Rs. 15, 20, or 25, varying according to the income of the church. Besides this, they have other emoluments--half a rupee for Mass, one rupee and four annas for funeral ceremonies, ten annas for marriage, and proportionate fees for other ceremonies. The

Latinites also have similar organizations, and priests get similar incomes, and are governed by three European Bishops—the Archbishop of Varapuzha and the Bishop at Cochin and Coimbatore.

Under these Bishoprics are a few High Schools, some Lower Secondary and many Primary Schools, all maintained at the expense of the church and from contributions by the members of the community, supplemented by Government grants.

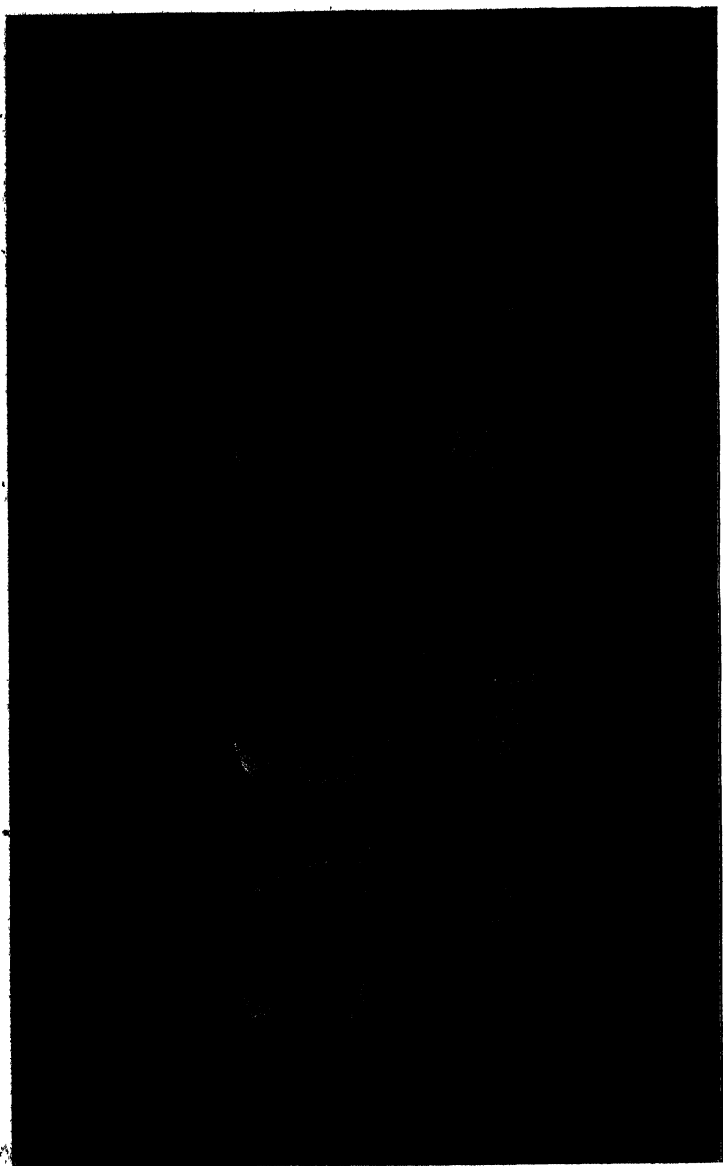
The Syrian Christians are an industrious and enterprising class of people. They are found in all grades of occupation. Many are agriculturists, while others are engaged in trade. The lower class of Christians learn every kind of art, and adapt themselves to every kind of occupation, in which they are generally proficient. Thus, there are, among them, many who are carpenters, blacksmiths, brick-layers, stone-masons, weavers, umbrella makers and the like.

The occupations above mentioned are pursued by the Latinites also, and a large number of them on the sea-coast live by fishing. They are an industrious community, somewhat backward in point of higher education. In the Government service the Christians rank numerically below the Brahmans and the Nayars.

These people take *Kanji* early in the morning with some pickles, and their dinner, which is at noon, often consists of boiled rice with vegetable or meat curries. Many are pork eaters, and for this they rear pigs. They consume all kinds of vegetables and the flesh of sheep, fowls, deer, pigs, porcupine, cows, snipe, etc. They consume the food prepared by all high caste Hindus, and the members of all Hindu castes from the Ezhuvans downwards eat their food.

The Romo-Syrians, like other Catholics, fast during Lent. All who have attained the age of twenty-one are bound to fast on one meal and a collation on the seven Fridays and the last Saturday of Lent and on the vigil of Christmas. On all fasting days except Good Friday, eggs, milk, butter, etc., are allowed, at the full meal. Milk in tea or coffee is not allowed except at the full meal or at the collation. The use of meat is forbidden on all Wednesdays and Fridays in Lent, on Holy Saturday and the vigil of Christmas. Meat is allowed to all once a day at dinner on all week days except on Wednesdays,

ROMO-SYRIAN BISHOPS (METRANS).



A GROUP OF JACOBITE SYRIAN LADIES

Fridays and Sundays. Flesh and fish cannot be taken at the same meal during Lent. Eggs, butter, milk and cheese are forbidden to all on Good Friday.

The Syrian Christians are mostly like the Nayars in their physical characteristics and are seen in all shades of complexion; the converts and their descendants possess all the characteristics of their fore-fathers except the tuft of hair on their heads. The males generally dress like the Nayars, but shave their heads clean without having a tuft of hair on the top like the Nayars. They do not wear ear-rings, nor bore their ears. The Romo-Syrians wear a small cross suspended from a string passing round their neck. The women are short in stature, and are as handsome as their sisters in the higher Hindu castes. Their loin dress consists of a white garment, with or without a coloured border, seven yards long, one or one and a quarter yards broad, and is worn folded with a number of fringes behind, but the end is not passed through the legs and tucked up behind like the Nayar women. The upper part of the body is covered with a jacket. Among the middle and lower classes the same dress is used for days together without renewal; and this, together with the irregularity in their bath which is taken only once or twice a week, make them appear very uncleanly. Boys and girls reading in schools are often seen in dirty dress and with skin disease on their body. The hair on the head of women is smoothened with cocoanut or gingelly oil, and is tied into a knot behind without being well parted.

The women bore their ears in several places, and wear a kind of heavy gilt brass rings (*Mekka mothiram*) at the top of each ear. The ear lobes are, by means of lead weights, very much dilated by the Syrian Christian women when quite young to wear a U shaped ornament at the time of their wedding but not afterwards. They have a necklet of sorts (*Ottezhapattak, Kombu, Thala, Nazhi*), rings of various kinds for the fingers and anklets. But many of these are not used after their first or second delivery.

Thus far have been described the customs and manners of the various sects of the Syrian community. Ethnically they are not a race, but are only the descendants of converts from all castes from ancient times and those recruited in

The Present Social
condition of the
Syrian Community.

recent times. There has not been much of fusion and intermingling among them till now. Their origin and early traditions are very much disputed. The caste customs and usages, in spite of the long lapse of time, have not quite disappeared even under rigorous christian teaching and discipline. Even now, there are among them various grades of social precedence which are brought into light in marriage settlements. The daughter of a high caste convert is not allowed to marry a low caste convert, though there are exceptions. There are many survivals of the Hindu customs observed at their weddings, and some of the Hindu holidays are still observed by them. They believe in astrology, magic, sorcery, and witchcraft. In religion they are under the wholesome discipline of the church. On the whole they are a thriving and industrious community in the State.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE JONAKAN MAPPILLAS.

The Jonakan Mappillas are a Muhammadan sect found all over the Cochin State, their chief centres being Cochin, Cranganore and some parts of the Mukundapuram Taluk. They are mostly either the descendants of the offspring of Arab traders and the low caste women of Malabar, or converts to the faith of Islam from the lower Hindu castes. They are a race peculiar to the West Coast, and numbered at the last Census 63,822, 32,707 being males and 31,115 being females.

The word *Mappilla* is, strictly speaking, applied both to these people and the Syrian Christians, who are also called *Nazarene Mappillas*. The significance of *Jonakan*, according to a Malayalam song (*Payyanūr pāttu*) is a sailor known as *Jónavar* or *Yavanar*, i. e., the Greeks.

The meaning of the word *Mappilla* is somewhat disputed. Dr. Day calls them "Mothers' children"—*Ma*, mother and *pilla* a child—the offspring of fugative alliances of the Arabs with the Thiyya or Choga women of the coast. He also says that the term is not used by the castemen; for it is a term of reproach cast on them by the rest of the community.¹ This statement, however, does not appear to be founded on fact, as there is no tradition nor any authentic account of the first Arab settlers of Malabar having had intercourse with native women, and much less, promiscuous intercourse, which would have been regarded as laxity of morals in the first Muhammadan missionaries.² The word also signifies a bridegroom on the day of marriage. The Syrian Christians, who were called by this name, were in former times a powerful and respectable community, and the title of *Mappilla* might have originally belonged to them, and been borrowed from them by the *Jonakans*. Dr. Gundert holds that Mappillas i. e., '*Mapillai*' was an honorific title applied to the western immigrants.

1. Land of the Perumals, p. 366.

2. Malabar Quarterly, Vol. II, page 84.

Traditional accounts of their origin exist in abundance, and differ materially from one another. Some of them are said to have settled on the West Coast in the seventh century, where they established themselves under Caliph Valid, and were believed to be a portion of the posterity of Hâshem, expelled by Muhammad for cowardice in his battles against the partisans of Abu Jákeem. In the 7th century a Muhammadan merchant named Málik Medina, accompanied by some priests, are stated by Moens to have settled in or near Mangalore. But the Muhammadans obtained no great footing until the ninth century of the Christian Era.¹

With regard to the introduction of Islam into Malabar, there is also the following tradition. The last of the Perumals (*Cheraman Perumál*) dreamt that the full moon appeared at Mecca on the night of the new moon and that when on the Meridian it split into two, one half remaining in the skies and the other half descending to the foot of a hill called "*Abu-Kubais*", where the halves joined together and set. shortly afterwards a party of Muhammadan pilgrims, on their way to the foot-print shrine on Adam's peak in Ceylon, landed in his capital Kodungallur, and reported that by the same miracle Muhamed had converted a number of unbelievers to his religion. This roused the curiosity of the Perumal, and with a view to embracing the Moslem faith, he managed secretly to leave his land with them for Arabia. Having privately arranged the affairs of his kingdom, and in particular, having assigned to the different chieftains under him their respective portions of territory, he sailed in a vessel constructed by the pilgrims, stayed a day at Quilandy, reached Dharmapattanam near Tellicherry the next day, and after entrusting the *Kovilagam* (palace) of that place to the care of the ancestor of the present Zamorins, took ship again, and landed at *Shahr* on the Arabian Coast. He assumed the same *Abdul Rahman Sâmiri*, and stayed there for a considerable time as a Muhammadan convert. After many adventures, he desired to return to his native country to establish the new religion, but was prevented from so doing, owing to his sudden and unexpected death. But before this took place he entrusted the work of propagating the New Faith to a family consisting of *Malik, Ibn, Dinar*, his two sons,

his grandson, and wife with their ten sons and five daughters, and gave them letters to various princes in Malabar, ordering them to allow the bearers to build mosques and to grant them other privileges. He directed them to land nowhere save at Kodungallur (Cranganore), Dharmapattanam, Pantaláyani, Kollam and Southern Kollam (Quilon). It is also said that they were received with great favour by the Zamorin of Calicut, who assigned to them some places in Calicut for their trade. The story then goes on to tell how mosques were erected at Kodungallur, Quilon, Má dai, Vakanur, Mykaláth (Mangalore), Kánjarakode (Kasrikode), Cheruvapattanam (Sreekanthapuram) and Pantaláyani (Cháliyam). This is said to have taken place in 843 A. D.

Mr. Logan gives information received from an Arab resident near the spot that the tomb of the Royal convert still exists at Zaphir near Shahr, where he is reported to have landed, and that the inscription on it runs as follows:—"Arrived at Zaphir A. H. 212, died there A. H. 216", his name being *Abdul Rahman Sámiri*. The dates given above correspond to 823 and 827 A. D. Further, the popular tradition that the *Kollam Era* of the West Coast, which dates from the 25th August 825 A. D., is based on the departure of *Cheraman Perumal* to Arabia as described above.

Thus all authorities agree in placing the date of the settlement of the Arabs in the middle of the ninth century. There is still a popular belief that the Royal convert was taken up to Heaven and that they expect his descent, for which purpose they still assemble at Cranganore, and keep ready the wooden shoes and water, and, on a certain night in the year, burn lamps as a festival in honour of his memory.

It is generally admitted that the convert king was Cheraman Perumañ and that the new religion met at the outset with opposition from the ruling class. It may also be noted that places such as Kodungallur, Quilon, etc., where mosques were erected through the influence of the four apostles (Malik Ibn Dinar, Habib Ibn Malik, Sherif Ibn Malik and Malik Ibn Habib), were already important commercial centres, and it is very probable that trade and propagandism were their chief motives. It is important to note that the Mappillas began early to rise in importance and their relationship with the 'Zamorins'

became more and more close. To the Zamorins the new element was a source of strength, supplying fighting materials on land and on sea, besides improving the trade of the country. The patronage of the ruling class was to the Mappillas the best means of gaining power and privilege, and to obtain these they allied themselves with the Zamorin.¹

The preponderance of Muhammadan influence in the Zamorin's court led to a change in the course of foreign trade. The fifteenth century marks the era of prosperity to Islam in Malabar. When Abdur Rasak visited the country, two *Jamath* mosques had grown up in Calicut. The power and influence of the *Mappillas* had grown to such an extent as to lead the author of the Malabar District Manual to say that the whole country could have been converted into Islam by force or by conviction; but the nations of Europe were busy endeavouring to find a direct route to the pepper country of the east. The ascendancy of Islam was manifest when Vasco de Gama visited Calicut.

The arrival of the European nations one after another gave a death blow to the Egyptian trade carried on by the Moors.

Concerning the origin of the Mappillas, it may be safely said that they form a kind of hybrid community composed of the descendants of mixed unions with very little of Arab blood, and with converts from the very lowest classes of Hindus. In the early days the Zamorins of Calicut encouraged conversion to a large extent for their own aggrandizement. This practice has been and is still going on even now in Malabar and Cochin State; and large numbers of recruits came from the Thiyyans of Malabar, Izhuvans of the State, and also from the Pulayans, to whom "the honour of Islam brings enfranchisement from the disabilities of their own caste". Occasionally but not often converts are drawn from the native Christians also. The hybrid nature of the race can be clearly noticed in its various physiognomy; those belonging to old families and occupying high social position are often very fair with fine features, while others are often indistinguishable from the lower classes from which they had their being.

The Mappillas generally live in towns near the sea-coast and very few of them live in the interior.

Habitations.

Even these, where the prospect of trade

1. *Malabar Quarterly Review*, Vol. V, page 220.

A GROUP OF JONAKAN MAPPILAS

induces them to do so, they congregate in towns and in small bazaars; but where agriculture is the chief occupation, each family resides in a detached enclosure or garden near their lands. Nevertheless they have not, like the Nayers, any objection to reside in a town. The houses of the wealthy people are somewhat like those of the Nayers and the Izhuvans, but the poorer classes live in huts consisting of two rooms and a verandah in front. There are no peculiarities in architecture or design calling for any special comment, and the typical Mappilla street is picturesque, though dirty.

Of the four sects into which the Muhammadans are divided *viz.*, Shafee, Hanafee, Ambalick, and Malick, the Mappillas belong to the first. The members of these sects profess the same religion, perform the same ceremonies, and make no objection to interdining, but do not intermarry. Absence of intermarriage is not based upon any religious sentiments or prejudices, but merely on certain social distinctions. They have no objection to entering into conjugal relationship with close relatives. The sons and daughters of brothers and sisters often intermarry. They also prefer matrimonial alliance between a man's son and his sister's daughter and *vice versa*. In Malabar and Cochin there are to be found the descendants of the Muhammadan *Pattáns* of Afghan descent, between whom and the Mappillas there is no intermarriage.

Mappilla girls are in these days, married before and sometimes after puberty, but generally marriages take place when girls are between 12 and 14 years of age, though some of them marry at an earlier age.

When a suitable girl has been selected for the marriage of a young man, a convenient day is fixed for the relations and friends of the bride and bridegroom to assemble in the house of the former to talk over the matter, and to settle the dowry to be given to the bride by her parents. The members assembled there are courteously received and sumptuously treated. The marriage of girls before puberty is generally celebrated during the day-time, but that of those after puberty, during the night.

All preliminaries having been settled and the day for the celebration fixed, the bride's party is treated to a feast in the house of the bridegroom, and the latter attended by his party proceeds to the house of the bride, where her father meets him

and sprinkles on him some rose water. The whole party then proceed to a *pandal*, in which they sit on carpets or mats spread on the floor, and partake of betel leaves and nuts. The only religious ceremony necessary for the wedding is the *Nikka*, which consists of the formal conclusion of the contract before two witnesses and the *Kazi* who registers it then. It can be performed by any learned man, but is generally the duty of the *Kazi* within whose jurisdiction the bride lives. It is done either on the day of the nuptials or any day previous to it—in some instances months, and in rare instances years, before the nuptials. In the latter case the bridegroom or his father and a select party go to the *Jumna Musjid* or any other mosque near the house of the bride, where the bride's father or grandfather or in their absence any other relation having religious authority to give away the girl in marriage presents himself along with the bridegroom before the *Kazi*, who makes the two repeat the necessary formula in the presence of two competent witnesses. The formula consists of the recital of the *Kalimur*, and a formal acceptance of the conditions of the match thrice repeated. But when *Nikka* is performed on the day of nuptials, it is done in the bride's house on or before entering the nearest mosque. In Calicut the *Kazi* personally goes to four particular houses, while the members of other houses are by time-honoured custom bound to go to the *Kazi's* house. After the performance of the *Nikka*, there is in the bride's house a grand feast to those that are invited to attend the wedding. As soon as the bridegroom and his party enter the bride's house, they are seated in a prominent place and the feast begins. The bridegroom and his best men are then conducted to a room specially prepared for their reception, and after a few minutes' stay therein, the latter withdraw, leaving the bridegroom alone. The bride with a *tali* tied round her neck by her sister is next introduced into the room by her female relations, and the door of the room is then closed by them. The pair are left together for a few minutes. The bride leaves the room first, and the bridegroom's best men or party then enter and take him back to his house. In some cases, they are permitted to spend the whole night together, and the bridegroom takes leave only the next morning. In some places the bride is first conducted into the bridal chamber, and the bridegroom is next introduced into it, but remains only a few moments and then leaves. This prevails

only in the case of girls who are very young, and the early marriage custom favours their practice. In North Malabar and Calicut the wife lives in her own house with her mother and her sisters as the Nayar women in a Marumakkathayam family. The husband visits her there, but in some cases, where the husband is rich and has a number of children, he erects a separate house for his wife and children. In such a case, the wife goes to the husband's house only on short visits. In South Malabar and in the Cochin State, the wife is taken to the husband's house soon after the nuptials as circumstances permit, and she lives there for ever, going to her own house only on short visits and for her first confinement. Co-habitation, as a rule, takes place immediately after marriage, unless the bride is very young. It may be said in this connection that, while the expenses on the part of the bride's parents in North Malabar are very heavy owing to the difficulty of securing suitable bridegrooms, in South Malabar and the Cochin State, where the people are poorer, matrimonial alliances are not so expensive.

If the girl is a virgin, her modesty is respected, and she is allowed to signify her consent or otherwise by signs or facial expressions. She can, for example, show her repugnance by covering her face and her consent by smiling. Among the Mappillas, the parents of girls take the responsibility, but if she is no longer *Virgo intacta*, she is allowed to speak freely.

Polygamy is very much in vogue among the Mappillas of the State as well as amongst those in the Ernád and Valluvanad Taluks of South Malabar. It may be stated without fear of contradiction that a very large number of these people are polygamists, having more than two wives, and some amongst them have even four. The wives all stay with him in the same house, and disunion amongst them is a perennial source of uneasiness to the husband, and frequently leads to divorce. The practice of marrying a deceased brother's wife and of a deceased wife's sister is also very common. Disparity in age is never considered objectionable. Polyandry is unknown.

Concerning polygamy, Syed Ameer Ali says, "Polygamy was recognised as lawful among the nations of antiquity; and the practice had received the sanction of the holy personages of Judaism. As among the Kulin Brahmans, the Pagan Arabs

put no limit on the number of wives a man might have. In certain stages of development polygamy is not an evil. The Arabian Prophet, with the true conception of the social and moral conditions and necessities of the age, with the questions in a manner which harmonises with the most advanced standard and at the same time meets the needs and requirements of the least progressed."¹

The Koran loudly proclaims the inferiority of women, which naturally justifies their subjugation, and this subjugation is great in all polygamous countries. There is no ambiguity on this point in the words of the Prophet. "Men are superior to women by reason of the qualities God has given them to place them above women, and because men employ their wealth in giving dowries to women. Virtuous women are obedient and submissive; they carefully guard during their husband's absence that which God has ordered them to preserve in tact. Thou shalt correct those whom thou fearest may be disobedient: thou shalt put them in beds apart; thou shalt beat them; but as soon as they obey thee again, do not seek cause for quarrel with them; God is merciful and Great."²

It is evident that Islamism arose amidst the full polygamic regime. Its founder could not dream of establishing any other. Polygamy was therefore established by divine right among the faithful, and as at the bottom it is in accord with primitive instincts of men, it has maintained itself in Mussalman countries from the time of Muhammed to our own days.

From the sociological point of view it gives us the opportunity of studying and estimating the polygamic regime in its full development.

"A Mussalman is allowed to marry one, two, three, or four wives, provided he can deal with all of them with equity. If that be not possible, he can marry but one. Many of the best minds of Islam have perceived in this, and a virtual prohibition on Mussalman society, as a whole, can hardly be ignored. It has, in Mussalman countries, untainted by foreign social ideas, prevented the growth of that class whose existence is an outrage to humanity and disgrace to civilization. Considering how the profession of the *hetairai*, honoured among some nations, despised amongst others, but tolerated by most, has flourished through all ages, it is no small credit to the Arabian teacher that it was so effectually stopped in Islam."³

1, 2 and 3. Islam by Amceer Ali Syed, page 29-36.

It is sanctioned by religion, and is actually practised without limit, the want of eligible husbands alone preventing it in all cases. There are isolated instances of women widowed young, having chosen of their own accord, life-long widowhood.

Re-marriage of widows. Religion permits a husband to divorce his wife on any ground whatever, and even on no grounds. In the actual exercise of this license, there is a vast difference between North and South Malabar. In North Malabar divorce is the exception, and is looked upon with much disapprobation; but in South Malabar it is almost the rule, and it is not of unfrequent occurrence even on the very first day after the marriage. At the same time, the act was pronounced to be 'the most abominable in the sight of the Lord'.¹

Divorce. A wife can divorce her husband only on specific grounds, such as the following:—1. His inability to maintain her with the least amount of comfort she can afford to put up with. This included the provision of a house, and the payment of the *Mahur* if demanded before intercourse. 2. Incurable and loathsome diseases of the husband or incurable impotency. 3. Permanent impairment of powers. Divorce by a husband is called *Talak*, and by the wife *Faskh*. Divorce is effected by the husband or the wife simply reciting the formula—"I have untied the tie between myself and wife or husband." Generally the husband recites the formula in the presence of the near relations of the wife; or in their absence, he intimates to the *Kázi*, having jurisdiction over the woman, the fact of his having divorced her. Utterance of the formula by word of mouth is however indispensable. There is nothing like recognised *panchayets* to settle disputes bearing on marriage, and such disputes are left to the decision of the *Kázi* and a few respectable men of the locality.

Pregnancy and Delivery Rites. As soon as a child is born, it is bathed in cold water and rubbed with a dry piece of cloth. It is then taken in hand by a Mullah; and raising it to the breast, the Mullah recites in the child's ears the two formulas of the call of prayers which are daily repeated five times, the first *Azám* to announce the hours of prayers and the second *Kámat* just before engaging in prayer to bring together the scattered congregation attending the

1. Non-Christian Religious Systems, Islam and its founder, page 157, 161, 164.

mosque. The primary object of this ceremony is to drive away the evil spirits. But it is also symbolical of the fact that the span of life allotted to the new comer is as short as the time between the *Kāmat*, second prayer-call, and the prayer itself. Then a piece of gold is rubbed in some rough vessel, a little honey is added, and the mixture given to the child.

The mid-wife engaged for the woman during delivery is a barber woman or a woman of the Mappillas in the Cochin State and South Malabar; and in North Malabar she is a Hindu barber woman. The next ceremony is the mother's bath on the fifteenth and on the twenty-eighth days after child-birth. The latter ceremony is performed with much pomp, and much money is squandered on it.

The time for naming the child varies in different places; in North Malabar it is done on the day of birth, while in the southern Taluks of Malabar and the Cochin State, it takes place within six months after the date of birth. It is sometimes done on the seventh day and sometimes on the fourteenth day. On the former day a goat or cow is sacrificed, and the flesh is distributed among the neighbours. The next ceremony is the tonsure, which is sometimes performed on the seventh day, but is generally postponed to the third month after birth. Friends and relations of the parents are invited and treated to a feast. The guests who are present, each gives a few annas to the barber, whose fee for the service generally amounts to three rupees.

A boy should be taught to pronounce the name of God and to recite *Kalima* at the age of four. Circumcision (*sunnath*), should be performed between the age of seven and fourteen years. It is usually done in the tenth or twelfth year. A Mullah offers some prayers and *fatehas* before the operation, which is performed by the barber with a sharp razor. The barber sits opposite to the boy, who has his cloth tied up to his shoulders, and a bystander should hold up a lighted lamp even if the operation is performed in the day-time. The usual time is just before high tide. The ceremony, which is the outward sign of the boy's admission into the fold of Islam, is made the occasion of much feasting and rejoicing, and large sums of money are often distributed to the poor. The boy must go to the mosque on the first Friday on which he is able



A IONAKAN MAPPILA MOSQUE

to go out. The ceremony of ~~cutting~~ ^{ear boring} for girls is an occasion for spending much money by those who can afford it.

Circumcision though, as a rule, practised by the Muham-medans, is not a positive precept and is not mentioned in the Koran. It was practised by the Arabs before Muhammed's time, and was continued by the faithful as an Abrahamic rite. Some of the Berbers of Morrocco do not practise it.¹

Throughout the Cochin State, the Mappillas follow inheritance in the male line, while in the Taluks of Malabar north of Calicut, their inheritance is in the female line. But in some places, *viz.*, Ponnani, Parappanangádi and Tirur of South Malabar, a man's family property goes to his nephews and his self-acquisitions to his sons and daughters. Curiously enough, even among those whose inheritance is patrilineal, the wife seldom lives with her husband in his own home, but on the contrary, the husband visits her as in a Marumakkathayam family.

The Mappillas belong to the Shafi school of the Sunni sect; that is, they acknowledge, besides the Koran, the authority of the *sunneh* or the customary law of Arabian theology as interpreted by *Shafi*. In South Malabar they are divided into two sects preferring allegiance to the valiya Járatingal Tangal of Ponnani and the Kundotti Tangal respectively.

The Mappillas acknowledge the religious supremacy of the Sultan of Constantinople. The Tangals are their religious leaders, and they are regarded with a high degree of respect, but they are not generally distinguished for their learning. The principal authority on religious matters is the *Makdun Tangal* of Ponnani. He is the head of the Ponnani religious institution founded more than six hundred years ago by one of his ancestors named Zein-ud-din, an Arab. At this college the students, who go from all parts of Malabar, Cochin, Travancore, and even from South Canara, are boarded out among the townspeople to study the Koran in the *Jamat Mosque*. The course of study is said to be somewhat unsystematic, but those selected by the *Tangal* to read 'by the big lamps' in the mosque are known as *Musaliyars* (Moulvi or elder) or *Mullahs*, and are fit and proper persons to give instructions in the *Kóran* and the

1. Lane, 'Modern Egypt' I, 82; II, 278.

commentaries (*kitab*). Near the *Jamát* mosque is the *Járam* or Mausoleum of the Tangals, an object of profound veneration among the Mappillas. The Mappillas strictly observe the five essentials of the Muhammadan religion, namely, the recital of the *Kalima* or creed, the five daily prayers (*niskáram*), the *Ramzan* fast, the duty of alms *Zakkáth*, *tithe* and the *Haj* or pilgrimage to Mecca.

The daily prayers are to be said at day-break, at midday, before sunset, after sunset, and at about 8-30 or 9 P. M., and ablution of the hands and feet head and face should precede each. The first *Niskáram* should consist of two *Rakháyats* or forms of prayer, comprising the *Fatéha* or recital of the first chapter of the Koran, and the usual genuflexions and prostrations (*sujúđ*), the second, third, and the fifth *niskárams* should consist of four *Rakháyats* and the fourth should consist of the three. All prayers are in the Arabic language, which only a very few even of the Tangals can understand. Prayers must be said in the mosque on Fridays, and the call to prayer (*Azam vanku* or "adzan") is made by the *Mulláh* or *Mukri*. It begins with the *Thakbir*, 'Allahu Akbar', and ends with the *kalima*, "La illaha Illal Lah".

"The Ramzan is a 30 days' fast corresponding to the 30 days' Lent, and begins as soon as the Ramzan new-moon is seen, and ends with the appearance of the next new-moon. It is supposed to be the survival of the old *Kaaba* worship at Mecca. The fast is in all its strictness observed, a good Mappilla refraining from even swallowing his spittle between sunrise and sunset, after which he may take food. The last *Niskáram* should, during *Rámzan*, be said at the mosque, and consists of 20 *Rakháyats*, and at Friday service there is a general congregational confession. The 27th night of the fast is considered the most holy time, and it is observed that on that night the *Kòran* is believed to be sent down from Heaven, and that the prayers said on that night secure pardon from all sins. Further, on that night the pious Mappilla should not fail to give alms, *Zakkáth*, to the poor amounting to 2½ per cent of his wealth, cattle and merchandise. On the night of the next moon the fast concludes with a grand feast called *Cheriya Perunnal* (little big day), as soon as the new-moon has appeared, and is accompanied as are all Mappilla festivals by many fireworks."

1. Non-Christian Religious Systems, Islam and its founders, page 185, 197.

The chief festival celebrated by the Mappillas is the *Bakrid* or *Valiya Perumal* in the third month after *Rāmzan*, which is said to commemorate

Festivals.

Abraham's offering of Isaac, and every Mappilla who can afford it must sacrifice a he-goat or a bullock, and distribute the flesh among his friends and relations and the poor.

The Mappillas only observe the ninth and tenth days of *Muharam*; they do not make taboots.

Shabi barat or 'night of record' on the 14th of *Shaban*, the month before *Ramzan*, is celebrated amongst the rich by the distribution of alms."

Mappilla mosques (*palli*) are rectangular buildings with sloping tiled roofs and ornamental gables in front. Like those of the Hindu temples, some

Mosques.

of them have gate-houses, and a few of the oldest have circular towers, though not in the *Cochin State*. The main entrance to the sacred edifice is towards the west so that the congregation may face the east and towards *Mecca*. There is often a small tank close by. A *Mullah*, who can read, but not necessarily understand Arabic, is attached to every mosque to lead the services; this *Mullah* is appointed by the congregation, though as a rule the *Kazi* nominates him. The *Kazi* is the head of the *Jamat* (lit: assembly) or Friday mosque, which corresponds to the parish church or the village temple. His functions include the reading of the Friday sermon (*Kutba*) the registration of marriages and general arbitration in civil and religious matters. His jurisdiction may extend to over more than one *desam* (village), and may include several minor mosques. *Musaliyars* are not necessarily attached to any particular mosque, but travel about preaching and teaching.

Islam, which means peace greeting, safety, or salutation, is the name given by the followers of the Arabian Prophet to their religion. It is pure monotheism, and in its ethical sense it signifies striving after righteousness. Its cardinal principle is a belief in the unity, power, mercy, and supreme love of the Creator. The Gospel of Islam is the *Koran*—the book in which are embodied the teachings and precepts of their prophets. The Mappillas worship many saints (*Ouliya-kanmar*), and martyrs (*Sayids* or *Sahibs*); and their religion betrays many traces of primitive animism. Celebrated *Tangals* such as the *Tangals* of *Mamran* and men of holy and austere

life are canonized, and their tombs (*Mukham, Jaram*), have become holy shrines and popular places of pilgrimage (*ziyarat*). Canonization is often easily obtained, for it is both honourable and profitable to be the guardian of such a shrine. Sometimes an unknown beggar dying of starvation on the roadside may be endowed with all sorts of virtues after death, and worshipped as a saint and miracle worker. The Shāhids are celebrated in hymns and popular songs, which have served to inspire the fanatics of many of the Mappilla outbreaks. Annual festivals called *Nircha* (vow) are celebrated in commemoration of these saints, the most important of which are those held at Malapuram and Kundotti in South Malabar. The Mappillas have a common religious observance in the celebration of what is called a *Mavulad* or *Maulad*. A Maulad is a tract or short treatise in Arabic, which celebrates the birth, life, works, and sayings of the Prophet or some saint such as Shaik-Mohiuddin, eleventh descendant of the Prophet, expounder of the *Kóran* and worker of the miracles, or the *Mambram Tangal*, father of *Sayid Fasl*. For the ceremony a Mullah is called in to read the book, which is in verse, and the congregation is required to make responses and join in the singing. This ceremony, which usually takes place in the evening, concludes with or is preceded by a feast, to which the friends and relations are invited. Every Mappilla, who can afford it, should perform a *Maulad* in honour of Shaik-Mohiuddin on the eleventh day and in honour of the Prophet on the twelfth. It should also be performed on the third day after a death. It is a common practice to celebrate it in fulfilment of a vow before any important undertaking on which it is desired to invoke a blessing; hence the custom of celebrating *Maulads* precluding outbreaks.¹

The absence of a specially instructed class of priests to act as intermediaries between God and man differentiates Islam from all other creeds. In the Islamic faith, every man is his own priest and pleads for himself forgiveness and mercy. No sacrifice, no ceremonial invented by vested interests is needed to bring the anxious heart nearer to its comforter. It is essentially a democratic creed, and recognizes no distinction of race or colour among its followers. High or low, rich or

poor, white or yellow or black, are on the same level in the sight of their Lord. The democratic character of its appeal, and its repudiation of caste explain the powerful fascination it exercises over diverse races. Every Mappilla family has a *Nattu Mappilla* or chaplain, who attends the house daily to read one of the 30 sections into which the Koran is divided, so that the whole can be read each month, and he also officiates at the family *Maulads*, and reads the Koran over the dead in the yard.

Though magic is condemned by the Koran, the Mappilla is very superstitious, and witchcraft is not by any means unknown. Many *Tangals* pretend to cure diseases with the aid of charms and amulets. Of these charms the most potent is a copy of the Koran. They also dispense scrolls for elusus, and small flags inscribed with sacred verses, which are set up to avert pestilence or misfortune. The Mappilla *Jins* and *Shaitans* correspond to the Hindu demons, and are propitiated in much the same way. One of their methods of witchcraft is to make a wooden figure of the enemy, drive nails into all the vital parts, and throw it into sea after the recitation of curses in due form. A belief in love philters and talismans, and precautions against the evil eye, are very common.

When a Mappilla dies, the pillow on which his head rested is removed, and his old dress is replaced, while the body is gently shifted to such a position as to make the legs stretch towards the *Kebila* in order to bring the face towards it. Then the two big toes of the leg are tied together by a piece of cloth, and the hands are placed on the chest, the right over the left, and the jaws are also bound with a piece of cloth. After keeping it in this position till the cries and mournings have subsided, and distant visitors have had an opportunity of seeing the dead body, it is removed to the bathing room and is washed in hot water. The corpse is then taken back into the house and laid on the floor on mats covered with clean cloth, on which rose water is sprinkled and grains of camphor strewn. The ears, nostrils, the space between the lips, the fingers, and toes, are stuffed with cotton. Three pieces in the case of males and five pieces in the case of females, of white cloth of about the length of the body are used for binding the feet, and the body

Magic Sorcery, and
Witchcraft.

Funeral Customs.

is tightly and gently wrapped in the winding sheets. From the moment of death till the body is removed for burial, Mullahs are employed to read the Koran by the side of the corpse. The body is next placed on a bier specially constructed for the purpose and kept in every mosque. The bier is borne on the shoulders of men to the mosque attached to which is the burial ground. In the graveyard attached to the mosque a grave is prepared, and *Tah Ul* (there is no God but God) and other holy hymns are repeated in a low and solemn tone. The bier is placed near the western wall of the outer room of the mosque, and the assembled mourners arrange themselves behind in parallel lines according to the principle observed in the daily prayer over it. This prayer differs from the daily one, and is said in a standing posture without the bowings and prostrations made in the daily prayers. The bier is then taken to the grave, which is ten feet long, two feet wide, and six feet deep. The body is then pushed in so as to make it lie on the right side, facing towards the Kebla, the position of the grave being from north to south. Then a handful of earth is placed below the right cheek as an emblem of humility. The grave is next covered with cut laterite stones, and each of the assembled individuals throws a handful of earth, reciting a particular passage from the Koran, besides the formula "there is no God but God", which is repeated from the moment the body is borne away till the grave is covered up. Two pieces of stone are fixed, one on either end of the grave, to mark the extremities. The Kazi or some other learned man seats himself at the head, and recites certain passages called 'the teaching', meaning thereby that the spirit of the dead is taught how to answer the questions that are believed to be put to him in the grave by the angels. In the case of rich persons, money and rice are distributed to the poor at the time of burial. A temporary shed is erected over the grave, and a number of Mullahs are appointed to read the *Koran* over it for three days a week or forty days, according to the means of the person concerned. The Mullahs read uninterruptedly day and night by turns, and they are also employed to read the *Koran* in the home of the deceased. This is done for not less than three days. All those who pay visits of condolence to the mourners are expected to do so on one of these three days

when; if circumstances permit, they are sumptuously fed, while the visitors in turn pray for the departed soul. On the third day a grand and costly ceremony takes place. *Maulad* (the history of the birth, etc., of the Prophet) is read, when Mullahs are paid for their services, and alms distributed to the poor. Some spend largely on the ceremonies connected with death, the aggregate cost being between 1,000 and 2,000 rupees. The remuneration paid to each Mullah varies from eight annas to one rupee. On the 15th and the 40th day, death ceremonies are performed, which consist in reading *Maulad* and feeding a large number of people, while the anniversary of the death of a relative is also performed by those who can afford to defray the expenses connected therewith. Predestination is firmly believed in. It is alleged that, as soon as the body is laid in the grave, the two examiners, *Monker* and *Nakir*, enquire into the work of the deceased during his lifetime. The bridge, which, from the earth to heaven, is said to pass over the centre of hell (a burning fiery furnace), is finer than a hair and sharper than a razor, and the good souls are assisted rapidly across by guiding and protecting spirits, while the wicked, who try to follow, fall down into the abyss below. After the consummation of all things, the bridge will be destroyed and communication cut off. The chief punishment is the denial of the sight of God, and there are eight degrees of beatitude according to the proximity of Him, nor is hell considered eternal, but after a certain period of expiation the cleansed souls are said to arrive in paradise.

Mappillas are found in all grades of work. The people
 Occupation. on the coast are mostly traders in all goods and get on exceedingly well, being bolder and more speculative than the Hindus of the District, while those in the interior are both traders and agriculturists. A large number of them are engaged in cooly work. In the interior they display the same superior spirit of adventure as agriculturists, traders, and sportsmen; and in these callings also they are successful and prosperous. They also make skull-caps, fine canvas beautifully embroidered by hand. They take an active part in fish-curing, which is best done by the Mappilla women. Many work as coolies in the plantations of Ceylon, Singapur, and Muritius, and other places, earning six to eight annas a day.

In personal appearance they are of a fine athletic build, though by no means so good looking as their fellow countrymen. Those of good and old families have a marked cast of features. Their high foreheads and pointed crowns are noticeable for being kept shaved and, when covered, the heads provided with a gaily embroidered skull-cap. Among the poorer classes of Mappillas, the men merely wear round their loins a piece of cloth (*mundu*) generally white with a purple border, but sometimes orange, green or plain white, and kept in position by a *nool* or waist string, to which are attached some pieces of gold, silver, or baser metals containing texts of the Koran or *Magic yantrams*. Many have a small linen skull-cap on the head. In the interior, men of property dress merely in a waist cloth often coloured and of mixed cotton and silk. On the back of the head, a Madras *rumal* handkerchief is tightly twisted, and an upper cloth generally of fine texture is thrown over the shoulders. A small knife is also worn at the waist. On the coast and in the towns all above the labouring classes wear a short white jacket (*angarika*), reaching half way down the thigh, and the sleeves are generally tight, and reach the elbow, though sometimes they are of the usual length. Beneath this many wear a *kamish* or loose shirt of the usual Mussalman pattern, while in the cold weather many wear a short jacket of cloth or padded silk. On the coast almost all wear a stiff cap four to six inches in diameter and four or five inches high, stuck on to the top of the head, and round this, a *rumal* or turban is often twisted. The cap is made of twisted silk thread, and the best sorts are brought from the Laccadive Islands. Sometimes this singular head dress is made of coloured paste board, and is several inches high. Very often a long jacket (*abbornaz*) or moorish cloak, reaching up to the ankles with a small jacket reaching up to the waist-coat over it; light cap of white cloth with a muslin turban and a red or striped handkerchief complete the dress of a man. Coats of European fashion are now finding favour among them, and the use of costly woollen shirts and coats is on the increase among them, so much so that it is a matter of wonder how they, who scarcely a generation ago, were able to wear nothing more than a *Mundu* or cheap cloth, manage to use such costly materials for their dress, when the complaint about the growing poverty of the native inhabitants

still is loudly heard on all sides. Mappillas have their heads clean, but beards are frequently worn especially by old men and *Tangals*, and *Hajis* or men who have made their pilgrimage to Mecca, and some holy men often dye their beard. Some again wear small moustaches well-trimmed.

The dress of the women is much more modest than that of the Hindu women. The poorer classes wear a cloth of a dark-blue colour reaching from the waist to the ankles, and a loose jacket of thick white cloth with long sleeves, the seams of which are often edged with red, and which reach a few inches below the hips. These and a small cloth thrown over the head and falling over the shoulders form the usual dress.

Among the higher classes, the dress is much the same, the difference being in the materials and colours. The upper cloth is generally so large as effectually to conceal the figure, and is used as a veil. Coral and bead necklaces are worn by the poor females, and ear-rings of coiled silver wire are inserted into the upper part of the ear. People of property, of course, indulge in a variety of female ornaments. In their personal habits the Mappillas of the lower classes are extremely dirty and slovenly. The women do not part their hair, but merely draw it back from the forehead and twist it into a knot at the back of the head.

Both men and women wear a cord round the waist, with two or three talismans of cylindrical shapes made of silver or brass, in which they keep rolls of paper with passages of *Koran* as charms. Often a few gold fanams or other small coins are kept in the same receptacle. Ordinary women appear in public without veils, but among the better class, it is usual to cover the head and body with a long robe. They are very scrupulous about the chastity of their women, who however enjoy very much freedom.

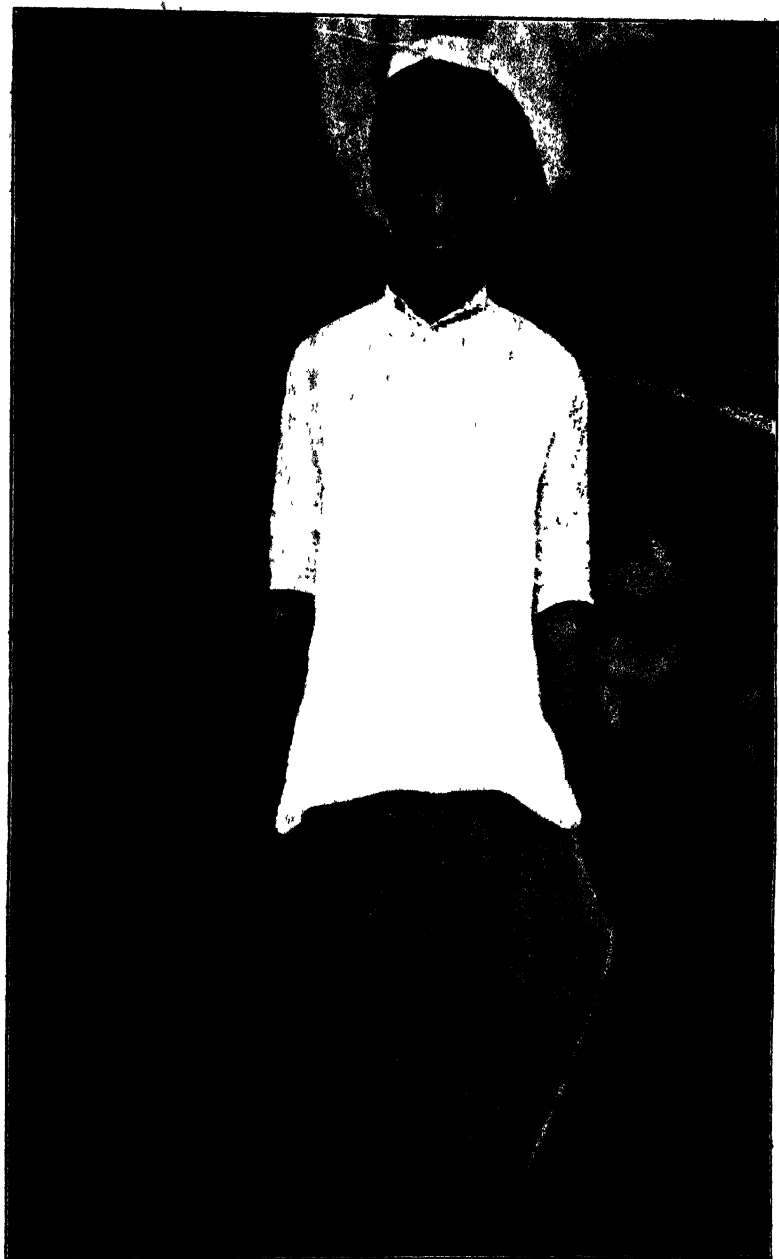
Incredibly large sums of money are spent on female ornaments. For the neck there are five or six sorts, for the waist an equal number. There are, besides, long rows of armlets, bracelets, and bangles and anklets all made of gold. As many as ten to fourteen holes are bored in each ear, one being in the lobe and the rest in the ala of the ear. The former is artificially widened and a long string of ornaments of beautiful

manufacture is suspended through it. A strict Sunni of the Shafi school is prohibited from boring the nose.

The principal food of the Mappillas is rice and fish. The consumption of wheat and flesh is however on the increase. They have generally three meals a day, *kanji* at about 10 o' clock in the morning, rice at 4 P. M., and rice *Orakanji* at 8 P. M. *Rotti*, a circular loaf made of rice or wheat flour mixed with water baked on heated iron or stone plate, is taken along with the *kanji*. Ghee is largely used in seasoning and frying the wheat and *rotti*. A liquid curry is prepared with flesh, and is sometimes eaten with the *rotti*. They have no scruples in eating food from the same plate along with others, as many as ten persons eating of the same plate. Crokery of foreign manufacture is in ordinary use. The plates are arranged on a circular mat measuring from two to four feet in diameter and made of date leaves, and the party sit round the mat which is called *sufra*. Various sorts of palatable and nutritious sweets are consumed. In the art of preparing sweets, the Mappilla women of North Malabar surpass their sisters of other castes in the District.

The consumption of alcohol is strictly prohibited. There is one unique instance in which religion permits the use of alcohol *i. e.*, drinks. If a person has his gullets blocked by any foreign body, and it is undoubtedly ascertained that a little alcohol will remove the danger, a quantity just enough to remove it may be taken. It is to be remembered that in no other instance is the use of alcohol permitted. There are, however, a few individuals who irregularly transgress the divine commandment on this point as in others.

The Mappillas as a class are illiterate. The only education received is a parrot-like recitation of portions of the Koran, which, being in Arabic, none of them can understand. The scruples of the parents prevent them from permitting their children to attend the vernacular school of the Hindus or even of the Government primary schools. They are indifferent to the education of their children even when special schools for them are started with religious instruction by their own teachers. The members of their own community who have advanced so far as to be able to read and write are not very many. Of their religion itself, the Mappillas possess only such knowledge as they can get



A MAPPILA BOY.

from Malayalam tracts, for which there is a considerable demand, especially for those detailing essential things to be attended to in pilgrimages to Mecca. The ceremonial observances connected with bathing, the washing of the hands and face, worship by prostration, the appropriate prayers, the hours of worship, the Prophet's commandments, acts vitiating efficacy of worship, the giving of alms, the observance of Ramzan and many other similar subjects are treated of in these tracts. Thus the people obtain from them accurate ideas of the out-ward forms of their religion in the observances of which they are very strict.

The Jonakan Mappillas are generally fanatical Muham-medans who are very fond of songs, mostly religious about their Prophet's battles and also of their ancestors. These songs are intended to stir up fanatical fervour, and in quantity they form nine-tenth of their literature. The following are the translations of some of them by F. W. Fawcett Esq. quoted from the Indian Antiquary vol. XXVII.

Mappilla-songs.—"In the name of God I begin the song. I pray to Muhammed the Prophet who is the cause of all created things. I pray also to his relatives and to the Ashabi army. I pray to all Mussalmans".

"The poet goes on to say that *"Abu Bekir Siddik was the first true Shahid.* Even the angels of God hold him in high respect. He was a true man and he never exposed his person to any one until his death. May God always bless him."

"*Omar Bin Katab is the next.*—He held the faith dearer than all his wealth and all his children. The dust in his hand was transformed into musk by the most high and the odour of that musk always pervaded his body."

"*Usman Bin Alvan is the third great Shahid.*—He had the Prophet's permission to admit any one he pleased to heaven. He visits every place like the lightning of Heaven. He is the most celebrated man in Heaven or earth; and he married two of the Prophet's daughters."

"*Isman Ali is the fourth.*—He is described a tiger in Baitul Issa. The angels of death fear him. He was the son of 'Abdulla's brother the most beloved of the Prophet and the husband of Fatima the Prophet's daughter, dearer to him than eye-sight". A tremendous fighter! "His name is written *"Tiger"* on the cot in these—"He is the gate of the Hall of Wisdom. May God always bless him,"

The story of the Perumal, the last king among knights of Malabar, and his voyage to Arabia where he met the Prophet are there told. Then we come to the *destruction of the Malapuram mosque*, where 44 Mappillas, the bravest of the brave, fought to death, parents, wives and children, tried to dissuade them, but to no purpose. The wives were told they would by their husbands' death in glory obtain salvation. But what about the present? Do you not see the sky sustain without a pillar frog in the deep recess of the rock, the chicken in the egg, and the child nourished in the womb? Is it reasonable that you will be helpless? Does a man in the grave think of his parents? When we are weighed in the balance who but God will help us? Can one's parents? If men permit sacrilege to their mosque all pains of hell await them. It is only by dying for the glory of God they can obtain heavenly bliss, and then they can bless and aid their families.

"Ho! Ye Brethren! The shahids are most mighty ghosts and Bhûtas fear them. The wicked Eblis is their enemy. Those who sing their praise obtain salvation from God. Those who slight them will suffer untold misery." "Nothing is more pleasing to God than sacrificing one's body and soul in defence of God and none more honoured than these Shahids." "They did not become Shâhids under compulsion but of their own faith and conviction; therefore God gave them a special place in Heaven and a crown in Tajil-Okar. Their bodies are always fragrant. God takes special care of them".

II.

The song of Alungal Kaudir.—Another of the songs was written by the popular Mappilla poet *Alungal Kaudi Moyankutty Vaidiar*, grandson of a convert from Hinduism, of the stock of the old Velan or Vaidiar, a hereditary Hindu physician. The poem begins with extolling Muhamed and tells how the king of Damascus was convinced of the truth of his mission when the Prophet made the moon rise at the wrong time ascend the zenith, divide, and each half pass through the sleeves of his coat. Then follows a version of the tale of Joseph, and Potiphar's wife and how innocent minister ascended to Heaven telling the king who suspected him that he would be pardoned if he accepted "the New Veda" which a Prophet was then bringing to men from over the sea.

Regardless of chronology, the poet tells how Islam was brought to Kerala and how eventually a grand mosque was built at Malapuram. Mappillas will not allow even an atom of the *Cadjan* roof of the mosque to be burned. They will fight to death for it, and they are glad of the opportunity. The poem continues:—"The soul in our body is in the hands of God". Can we live for ever in this world? Must we not die once? Everything will die, but God alone will not. Such being the commandment of God, we will have no excuse when we are brought before them after death; so determine earnestly to fight and die. If we die fighting with the wicked men who attempt forcibly to burn the holy mosque which is the house of God, we shall obtain complete salvation. The occasion to fight and die for the faith is like unto embarking in a vessel which has come to bear the believer to the shores of bliss. Therefore embark! How well for you that such a vessel has come! It will bear you to the broad gates of Heaven. Is it not for the arrival of such a vessel that we should pray"?
"The pleasures of wealth, or family, are not equal to an atom of celestial happiness. Our most venerable Prophet has said that those who die in battle can see the *houris* who will come to witness the fight. There is nothing in this world to compare with the beauty of the *houris*. The splendour of the Sun, of the Moon, and of the lightning is darkness compared with the beauty of their hair which hangs over their shoulders; their cheeks, eyes, faces, eye-brows, foreheads, heads, are comparatively lovely. Their lips are like corals, their teeth like the seeds of the *Thalimathalam*; their breasts like the cups of gold, the pomegranate or like beautiful flowers. It is not possible for the mind to conceive the loveliness of their breasts and shoulders. If they wash in the sea, the salt becomes like honey, and as fragrant as *attar*. If they were to come down to earth and smile, the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars would be eclipsed. Mortals would die if they but heard the music of their voice. When they wear red-silk garments bordered with green lace of 70 folds, their skin, bones, and muscles can be seen through them. Such is the splendour of their body. If they clap their hands the clang of their jewels will be heard at a distance of 500 years' journey. They clap their hands, and dance and sing as they come like swans to the battle-field. If

a human being were to see their beauty, their smile or dance, he would die (with longing) on the spot. Gently they touch the wounds of those who die in battle, they rub away their blood and cure the pain, they kiss and embrace the martyrs, give them drink of the sweet water of heaven and gratify their every wish. A horse caparisoned with carpets set with precious stones will be brought, and a voice will say "Let my men mount; let them dance with celestial *houris*". Then the celestial coverings will be placed on their heads; they mount the beautiful horses which will dance and leap and take them away to heaven where they will live in unbounded joy".

..... "Such is the fate which awaits those who die fighting bravely. At the dissolution of the world they will be sped like lightning over the bridge across hell. In Heaven they will attend the marriage of Muhammad. They will be decorated with bunches of pearls and crowns of gold; they will be set on the tusk of Muhammad's elephant, and enjoy supreme happiness. It is impossible to describe the pleasures which await those who die fighting bravely without flinching. All their sins will be forgiven, and God will listen to all their prayers".

"Far otherwise is it with the coward. All his virtuous actions will be ignored. He incurs the wrath of God. He will be written down a renegade in the book of God. His prayers are vain. He will die a sinner and be thrown into hell where fresh kinds of torture will be given to him. In hell are countless myriads of scorpions, snakes, and frightful dragons. "It is a pit of everlasting fire". The pleasures of Heaven and the pains of Hell have been revealed to Muhammad "who in his turn taught his disciples. It is the learned Musaliars who now hold the knowledge."

Let it not be supposed that the above feelings are entirely sensual and erotic. On the contrary, the "Mappilla" version of Islam has had a strong effect for good on his life and morality.

III.

"*The Battle of Bedr* :—Another song by the same poet is of Muhammad's famous battle of *Bedr*, where he routed the Koriash also a subject of endless interest to Mappillas. They say that as the battle was fought in the 17th Ramzan in the

second year of the Hijra, it is a good day on which to die fighting. Curiously enough, the month of fasting, during which it is enjoined not to fight unless forced to do so, is the very one in which the Mappilla the *ultra* strict follower of the Prophet according to his lights, chooses to go out to fight and die. The twelfth day of Ramzan is with them a good day on which to start out under devotion to death and it was selected in a last rising. The poet describes how the angel Gabriel told the prophet that bliss awaited those of his followers who died fighting with the infidels. The prophet then tells them how they could gain paradise and be met by the *houris*, whose eyes are like the waxing moon, whose cheeks are like the plantain leaves, who are soft as the petals of the young shoe flower, "by way of inspiring them with courage. The imagery is not quite so happy as before, for the necks of the *houris* when they walk wave to and fro is like the neck of a rutting elephant. But their breast is like a lake wherein are lotus flowers, and they are always 16 years old and very amorous". "They come like sporting elephants to bear away those who die in battle and strive with each other saying "I will take him, I will take him". The prophet swore to his army that such happiness would be theirs if they died fighting bravely". Omar was eating dates, when he heard this he cast them away. The prophet asked why? He replied that he wished to waste no time in eating dates. "I wish to use my time for fighting," and so saying, he rushed like a lion among a flock of sheep, killed many and died fighting; he met the death he wished for". The father fought against the son, for, the bond of the faith is stronger than the bond of blood. The angels of death fought on the side of the prophet and the Koriesh were defeated."

The Mappillas of Cochin are mostly poor and ignorant,

Conclusion. "but unlike their brethren in South Malabar, they are on the whole peace-loving and law-

abiding. In religion they are very orthodox, and their piety and zeal sometimes border on fanaticism. They do not take advantage of the educational facilities afforded to them by the Darbar, and do not make any serious attempt to raise themselves socially, morally and intellectually. Their marriage prohibitions, like those of the Jews are very few, and all matrimonial alliances are formed in accordance with the precepts

of the Koran. Polygamy prevails among them to a larger extent than any other community in the State. Physically, they are, on the whole, a fine class of people, and are fit for any hard and enduring labour. They are much attached to those who treat them with kindness and consideration, and are by far the most serviceable and most reliable in emergencies.

END OF VOLUME II.

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